

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CROSS-BORDER MARRIAGES
: ECONOMIC CHANGES AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION IN SOUTH KOREA

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I analyze cross-border marriages between South Korean men and Vietnamese women within the framework of social reproduction. The volume of Vietnamese cross-border marriages has increased dramatically with the emergence of the commercial marriage brokerages industry in the late 1990s. While NGOs have raised concerns about the commodification of Vietnamese women, the South Korean government has actively supported cross-border marriages through legislations. Why and how cross-border marriages have increased in South Korea at this moment and gained so much attention in the policy arena are the primary questions addressed in this dissertation.

The practice of cross-border marriage between Korean men and foreign women started as a response to widespread concern over the inability of large numbers of rural bachelors to find marriage partners in the 1980s. The “rural bachelors problem” arose in the context of growing concerns over the sustainability of rural communities that arose as a result of the policy of export-oriented industrialization that began in the 1960s. The increase in rural to urban migration and women’s labor force participation, and the decline in fertility and marriage rates continued during this period and contributed to changing family patterns and the dismantling of the family as a key institution for care provision. By the mid 2000s, low fertility and a “care deficit” became national concerns and a series of legislative correctives, including the Framework Act on Healthy Families were implemented. Growing attention was paid to the “Multicultural Family,” which is the government’s official term for unions arising through cross-border marriage.

While much of the discussion surrounding cross-border marriage focuses on individual marriage migrants' experiences, this dissertation focuses on the structural changes that accompany cross-border marriage. I use social reproduction as a framework within which to discuss both the demographic and the political economic context within which the practice has grown, including changes in migration patterns, women's labor force participation and their role in care provision, and the contexts of the welfare regime and notions of citizenship. I take the family, in particular the multicultural family, as a site through which to explore how these contexts and processes. .

Care provision has become increasingly important in the current global political economy. Recent research on the global care chain and the feminization of labor migration has articulated how the pressure to reduce the cost of care provision in the context of the decline of the welfare state has contributed to affect female labor migration. In a similar vein, I have found that the increase in marriage migration coincides with the population and care crisis, which has resulted from the decrease in fertility and marriage rates, changes in family patterns, and the increase in women's labor force participation that has occurred since the industrialization period. Women have been primarily responsible for care provision within the family in South Korea. The pronounced care crisis at the moment cannot be separated from changes that have taken place in family patterns and women's roles. While the Korean government has increased the social expenditures, efforts to restore the family as central to care provision continue.

I argue that the recent increase in marriage migration in South Korea is one manifestation of social reproduction in this context.

As of 2009, cross-border marriage became more than a rural phenomenon, as more than 50 percent of Vietnamese marriage migrants to Korea were living in urban areas. The data show that most are marry into low income families and nearly half of them live with in-laws, which is ten times higher than the rate among Korean-Korean families. Marriage migration helps address the population and care crisis in South Korea by contributing to the formation of families and providing care for children and elderly in the low income families. Lastly, it is worth noting that multicultural families are indispensable in the current making of “Multicultural Korea”. Marriage migrants and their low income families are mobilized in the celebration of “Multicultural Korea,” yet their marginalized socio-economic status is hardly recognized in this process.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Hyunok Lee is a PhD candidate at the department of Development Sociology, Cornell University in USA. She engaged in the young feminist cultural movement when she studied political science at Yonsei University in Korea in the mid 1990s. However, the experience of Asian financial crisis changed her interest to gender and political economy: how the political economic changes are processed in a gendered manner in a market economy. She studied Gender and Development at Sussex University in UK and wrote a Master thesis on feminization of labor and the discourse of trafficking in women in 2002. She continued her study at Cornell University. Her research areas are gender and migration, economic development, welfare regime and social reproduction. She is particularly interested in theorizing marriage migration in the context of changing care regime, exploring the historical relations among the set of categories such as production/reproduction, market/non-market, public/private and gender in Asian context.

DEDICATION

언제나 나를 믿어주신 어머니 아버지께

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Topic: State, Market and Cross-Border Marriage

This thesis examines the phenomenon of cross-border marriage between Korean men and Vietnamese women in political economic context. Cross-border marriage between Korean men and foreign women began in the late 1980s as a solution to the “rural bachelors’ marriage” problem in South Korea.¹ Rural bachelors’ marriage became a national issue in the context of questions concerning the sustainability of rural communities in the 1990s. The number of cross-border marriages has increased considerably overtime. As of 2009, 167,090 marriage migrants were living in Korea, 89.7% of whom were women (Ministry of Administration and Security, 2009).² In addition, 86.8 % of all female marriage migrants were living in cities. In other words, the impact of cross-border marriage now extends beyond rural areas.

Beginning in the mid-2000s, the discourse of the “multicultural society” gained currency in the policy and media arena, as shown in newspaper article titles: “1 million foreigners, Korea is heading to multi-cultural society” and “Foreigners occupy 1% of the population, Multi-cultural society arrives in Korea” (Seoulsinmun, 2005; Naeilsinmun, 2005). The group receiving the most attention was marriage migrants, despite their small numbers. “Marriage migrants” and “multicultural family”³ have

¹ I will use Korea hereafter.

² The Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea defines a “marriage migrant” as “a person of foreign origin who married a Korean national or is in a married relationship with a Korean national” [“immigrant by marriage” is defined as a “non-ethnic Korean who used to have a marital relationship with a Korean national and/or is in the middle of a marital relationship with a Korean national” — official translation]. The classification doesn’t necessarily pay attention to initial visa status, but indicates people who have spouse visas (F21 and F13) at the time of the survey. However, this number is the sum of those with spouse visas and those with Korean citizenship.

³ The government’s official term for a family created through cross-border marriage.

been buzzwords in the policy arena since the mid-2000s, when a wide range of policies for cross-border marriages or multicultural families began to be implemented.

These policies can be roughly grouped into two kinds: those initiating cross-border marriages in rural areas and those supporting “multicultural families.” Until 2007, about 24.7% of the municipalities in Korea implemented a bill to support cross-border marriages, whereby local governments provide financial support for local bachelors so that they can marry foreign women (Choi, 2007, p. 18). In 2006, a nationwide network of “Multicultural Family Support Centers” (formerly Marriage Migrants Support Centers) was established. As of 2009, 119 local centers at the district and county level were in operation⁴ (<http://mfsc.familynet.or.kr/>). In 2007, the Act to Regulate Marriage Brokerage Agents (Act. No. 8688) was implemented. Finally, the Support for Multicultural Families Act (Act. No. 8937) was implemented in 2008. The enthusiasm around the issue of cross-border marriage in the public policy arena is curious in many ways. Although the number of cross-border marriages increased dramatically in a short period of time, the response to this trend seems to be unusually passionate. Given the small number of marriage migrants, it even seems to transcend the general rational assessment of implementing policies. It is worth exploring the conditions and implications of cross-border marriage and the government’s engagement around this issue. In this dissertation, I will explore the socio-demographic changes in the process of economic development in Korea and the relevant policies, which corresponds to these change.

The development of the marriage brokerage industry is indispensable to explain the growth of cross-border marriage. For example, cross-border marriages between

⁴ As of 2008, there were 80 centers.

Korean rural bachelors and Korean Chinese women were arranged by public figures or organizations in the late 1980s and the 1990s.⁵ However, with the deregulation of the marriage brokerage industry in 1999, the origins of women marriage migrants diversified and the volume increased dramatically. In particular, the number of Vietnamese women increased dramatically, and they became the second biggest group of marriage migrants. In 2000, there were 95 marriages between Korean men and Vietnamese women, and the number of incoming Vietnamese marriage migrants almost doubled each year, peaking at 10,131 in 2006 (National Statistical Office, year not listed).⁶ The total number of Vietnamese women who married Korean men was 21,513 in 2007 (Ministry of Justice, 2008b).⁷ Unlike ethnic Korean Chinese, who is the biggest marriage migrant group, Vietnamese women do not have ethnic ties to Korea. Vietnamese marriage migrants tend to be more associated with the development of the commercial marriage brokerage industry because of widespread commercial advertisement⁸ during the 2000s and the sudden increase in marriage brokers. In this sense, marriage between Korean men and Vietnamese women is an important topic for studying the development of the commercial marriage brokerage industry. Exploring the emergence of commercial match making industry in relation to the question of how cross-border marriages became important in the policy arena in Korea, both in terms of conditions and implications, adds more layers to understand the issue of cross-border marriages and leads us to ask bigger questions on economic and social changes.

⁵ A number of newspapers reported that the trip to China was organized for rural bachelors to meet Korean Chinese women (Kukminilbo 1990, Hankookilbo 1991, Hankookilbo 1993, Dongailbo 1991, Dongailbo 1992). See chapter 5 for more details.

⁶ “Marriage by Foreigner’s Nationality by Year.” This statistics are based on vital statistics.

⁷ This report also notes that there are 8,145 illegal migrants who came through marriage.

⁸ See chapter 4 for more details.

1.2 Research Context

It is worth noting that the trend of cross-border marriage is not limited to Korea. Jones and Shen (2008) described the rise of new destinations of marriage migration in East Asia as a prominent trend of cross-border marriages within East and Southeast Asia. Indeed, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore have shown similar trends in cross-border marriage, even though the time span and periods are different. These destinations arguably share common economic development experiences. I do not attempt to theorize the causal relations between economic development and cross-border marriage. Rather, I pay attention to the historically specific experiences of these countries, which contributed to form the conditions of cross-border marriages.

I examine cross-border marriage in East Asia and its relationship to political, economic, social and cultural concerns. Any economic changes have political, social, and cultural implications, and vice versa. The rules and culture of a society are often articulations of the ways in which production and social reproduction are organized (Bakker and Gill, 2003). Furthermore, production and social reproduction cannot be separated. In other words, rapid changes in Korea's economic structure may have paralleled the changes in the organization of social reproduction in general. While there is a wealth of literature on the economic miracle of East Asia, the arena of social reproduction has received little attention. This project specifically attempts to explore the processes of the changing organization of social reproduction as it pertains to cross-border marriage. Cross-border marriage is grounded in the historical political economic changes. One may argue that cross-border marriage has existed ever since any form of boundary was first recognized and that the gendered power relations within this kind of marriage are universal. I ground this research in recent historical time, however. I pay more attention to the historical specificity, which cross-border

marriage bears, than to the universality. For example, marriages between Vietnamese women and French men during the colonial period and marriage between Vietnamese women and Korean men today may be similar in terms of power relations, and both have been described as unions between women from less powerful or affluent countries and men from more powerful or affluent countries. The structural conditions that make Korean men prospective bridegrooms at the moment are very different from those that made French men enter such unions in the colonial period, however. At a minimum, the current dramatic increase of cross-border marriages in Asia reflects specific political economic changes in the region.

1.3 Research Questions

These stances can be re-articulated in accordance with several theoretical perspectives. In this dissertation, I engage in a range of literatures, from cross-border marriage and migration, to population dynamics, economic development, social reproduction, women's labor, welfare, and citizenship. I engage in a particular set of theoretical questions. The first question is whether marriage migration can be understood in terms of current theories of migration that have been developed based on labor migration. This question arises from observations surrounding the intensifying feminization of labor migration⁹ that suggest that is a similar process to the growth in marriage migration. Although labor-migration theory provides a general framework, this framework must be modified to incorporate the different nature of marriage migration including its political implications, which are linked to citizenship attainment, and its informal economic implications which occur largely in the domestic sphere.

⁹ There has been debate on whether the notion of the feminization of labor migration is empirically applicable (Jorgen Carling 2005). It is applicable when we take into consideration of the increase of care work opportunity which induces women's migration for this opportunity. By feminization of labor migration, I mainly refer to "the feminization of migration for care work."

To reiterate, I ask whether the current increase in marriage migration can be understood through the lens of the feminization of labor migration. The feminization of labor migration is often explained in the context of the decline of the welfare state and the privatization of care provision in the global North (Yeats 2005, Hochschild 2003, Parrenas 2001). The pressure of lowering the cost of public care provision and the immobile nature of care services induced female migrant workers to do the care work. Although this explanation is plausible, it is limited to societies that have experienced a welfare state. The decline of the welfare state indicates changes in the mode of social reproduction. If we are to understand similar phenomena in other parts of the world, we must pay attention to how production and social reproduction have been organized in a society.

The concern of the organization of production and reproduction in a society brings our attention from migration to the welfare regime. In terms of the migration perspective, this discussion is about the structural conditions of migration. The welfare regime in Asia is known as a “family dependent regime.” As stated in the previous section, production and reproduction cannot be separated. The discussion of the welfare regimes reflects the concerns of social reproduction. In order to provide a more concrete historical context, I narrowed the focus to Korea, despite the general commonalities of new destinations of marriage migration in Asia.

The family has played an important role in care provision and population reproduction in Korea. Rapid economic development process has resulted in changes in the industrial structure, in population structure and distribution, in family patterns and in women’s labor force participation. This has challenged the traditional arrangement of care provision and population reproduction. The initial crisis manifested itself in the

case of “rural bachelor’s marriage,” which reflects the crisis of social reproduction in the rural areas in the 1990s, then later shown as the issue of “low fertility” and “care crisis” in the 2000s. Based on this context, I argue the following: cross-border marriage was prescribed explicitly as a solution for the rural bachelors’ crises, and has continued to be used implicitly as a mechanism for dealing with further crises of population and care. These crises are largely based on the specific gendered mode of the economic development in Korea and will be discussed in greater details later in the dissertation. In other words, while the feminization of labor migration has contributed to and been induced by the reorganization of social reproduction in some post welfare states, the emergence of institutionally supported and commercially organized marriage migration has also emerged along with the reorganization of social reproduction in East Asia.

Social reproduction is a key framework to make these arguments possible. Social reproduction has three dimensions: biological reproduction, reproduction of labor, and reproduction of the totality of the society (Edholm *et al.*, 1978). Each dimension has been discussed in different literatures such as population, feminist economics, social policies, feminist politics, and Marxist literature. As a result, social reproduction has yet to be developed as a coherent theoretical framework. The most concrete discussion has grown out of the feminist debate on unpaid domestic labor in the 1970s. It pays attention to what is considered “non-economic” in the conventional economic discourse such as women’s unpaid domestic labor in the family and discuss its contribution to the capitalist economic development. This debate offers grounds for gendering the conventional theories by unsettling the notions of labor and economy, and highlighting the gendered nature of economic structure. For example, it may be

useful to modify theories of labor migration in order to understand marriage migration to a certain extent.

The strength of the social reproduction framework to date has been that it has shed light on the relations among various sets of categories such as economics/politics, production/reproduction, public/private, market/nonmarket and gender. While the discussion of the feminization of labor migration is largely based on the reproduction of labor, that is, the changing mechanisms surrounding care provision in the global North, the organized marriage migration in East Asia needs to be discussed based on all three dimensions of social reproduction. At the moment, low fertility is a national policy concern in all of the new destinations of marriage migration. That an increase in cross-border marriage has been observed in the societies of East Asia also raises some new questions of national identity. I discuss these matters in greater detail in the pages that follow.

1.4 Research Methods

This project relies on a historical approach, yet the aim of this project is not to write a history. I focus on public policies and socioeconomic indicators in order to describe the changes in production and reproduction because “public forms of authority or rule may be the primary means through which social coordination and social reproduction are articulated” (Bakker and Gill, 2003, p. 23). For example, while I may begin with statistical data, which demonstrate the growth in cross-border marriage trend, as well as the demographic conditions underlying this trend, this project ultimately attempts to connect these trends to other political, economic, and cultural changes and aims to understand the phenomenon of cross-border marriage through these changes.

As I have said, topics I explore are population, welfare, family, and women's labor. These areas are directly linked to the concerns of social reproduction, in particular biological reproduction and the reproduction of labor. My research areas are thematically grouped: 1) the emergence of new destinations of marriage migration in Asia; 2) the growth of the commercial marriage brokerage industry; 3) the relationships between economic development and population structure changes, in particular those pertaining the rural population in South Korea; and 4) the current articulations of the population and care crises in Korea, and cross-border marriage. I investigate these topics through several methods: 1) secondary data analysis; 2) archival research; and 3) fieldwork with interviews, focus groups, and participatory observation. These data are put into conversation in the historical context.

1.5 Structure of Chapters

This dissertation consists of six chapters. The next chapter offers a theoretical discussion on cross-border marriage and social reproduction. The third chapter discusses my methodology and the details of my fieldwork. The fourth chapter outlines the demographic conditions underlying cross-border marriage in Korea and Vietnam in relation to political economic changes in the societies. The fifth chapter focuses on commercial marriage brokerage and individuals' experience of this process, and I discuss some of the institutional changes that have contributed to the development of this industry. The sixth chapter explores the conditions for the formation of the commercial international marriage market in Asia. The seventh chapter discusses the current population and care crisis in Korea and the role of cross-border marriage as a mechanism to deal with these problems.

CHAPTER TWO:

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cross-border marriage is located in the intersection of myriad of different discussions including migration, marriage, family, population dynamics, economic development and social reproduction. Yet, the academic discussion on cross-border marriages doesn't necessarily grasp all these dynamics. This chapter offers a current academic discussion on cross-border marriages and discusses the issues around conceptualizing cross-border marriage. Taking the discussion on feminization of labor migration as a starting point, I attempt to bring marriage migration into this discussion and expand it to the discussion on feminization of migration. In doing so, I explore the debates around social reproduction starting from the domestic labor debates in the 1970s to the discussions on family, welfare regimes, citizenship and population.

2.1 Studying Cross-Border Marriage and Its Troubles

2.1.1 Current Literature on Cross-Border Marriage

“Cross-border marriage” is defined as a union between people who are from different national territories. It entails various types of cross-bordering, including across race, ethnic, class and other socio-cultural boundaries¹⁰. “Cross-border marriage” is not a new phenomenon. It may have existed since the first territorial boundary was created. In this sense, the discussion of cross-border marriage cannot be divorced from the discussion of historical political economic changes.

¹⁰ See Constable (2005)

The term tends to be used interchangeably with “international marriage” or “transnational marriage” in the literature. In all cases the national border is an important element, but there are subtle differences among the concepts. For example, “international marriage” signifies the centrality of the national identity of individuals who are involved in the cross-border marriage process. As Piper (2003) puts it, “cross *national* marriage is a particularly modern phenomenon, reflecting the emergence of the nation-state along with standardization of marriage practices among the wider population” (p. 321). In other words, “international marriage” indicates historically specific political economic circumstances, in which the nation-state is the primary unit of analysis. “Transnational marriage” addresses the continuous financial and cultural exchanges between origin and destination as an extension of the discussion of “transnational family.”¹¹ In this study, I use the term cross-border marriage, for which the focus is border-crossing, because it acknowledges the national border as an important distinction and yet allows us to think about ethnic and cultural differences, and because this term has greater potential to explore various historical specificities such as the formation of the current political economic system in East Asia and the embedded structural economic disparity within the Asian region.

Cross-border marriage recently gained attention in the context of the increase in cross-border mobility of people, in particular the feminization of migration and the discourse of trafficking in women over the last several decades. Nicole Constable (2005) describes recent patterns of cross-border marriage as follows:

a majority of international marriage migrants are women, and most of these women move from poorer countries to wealthier ones, from the less developed global south to the more industrialized north—from parts of Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, to Western Europe,

¹¹ See Lu (2007)

North America, Australia, and wealthier regions of East Asia—*echoing some of the common patterns of women's labor migration*. (p. 4, emphasis added)

This observation suggests that strong economic elements play a role in the process of cross-border marriage and that the conditions and contributing factors of this phenomenon may greatly resemble those of labor migration. However, marriage migration is distinguishable from labor migration for the following reasons. First, there is a direct association between this form of migration and the attainment of citizenship and membership in the family, both of which raises a host of political questions; second is the importance of intimate relationships that are associated with marriage and family; third is the subtlety of the economic transaction in some of this form of migration. Some of the economic transactions in marriage migration are obvious, as in the remittances, bride price, and payment to commercial marriage brokerage agencies. Others are more subtle, as in women's unpaid care labor in the family and unequal conjugal relationships. There is often an expectation that marriage migrant will perform as a housewife and caregiver within the family. Moreover, these obvious economic transactions are connected to seemingly noneconomic dimensions of family life in many cases. These characteristics of marriage migration do not allow for simple adaptation of current theories of migration, which are based on the studies of labor migration. Careful attention must be paid to the notion of care labor and domestic labor in the family, both of which have often been left out of the economic discussion, and to their link to economic processes and political and cultural ramifications.

One common approach to conceptualizing cross-border marriage is through the notion of “mail-order bride,” especially in the case of Asian women. Piper (2003) points out that “scholarly work on international couples involving Asian women typically

revolves around the mail-order bride issues” (p. 458). The mail-order-bride perspective suggests that women in poor countries are forced to choose cross-border marriage for economic reasons (Constable 2003, 2005; Piper 2003). From this perspective, economic disparity among states is a key condition for cross-border marriage, but this structural economic factor tends to be automatically translated in terms of individual economic benefits. This approach has been criticized because it often characterizes women who are involved in cross-border marriage as victims of economic structural violence. As a result, there have been corrective efforts made to shed light on the agency of women and the complexity of power relations within cross-border marriages (Constable 2005). Too often, however, the economic structure continues to be seen as a problem without paying adequate attention as to how or why. One of the key shortcomings of the mail-order-bride perspective is not the economic structural perspective per se, but the simplistic approach to the role of economic structures, that is, its assumption that structural economic disparity automatically translates into individual economic benefits and that individuals make rational choices. What is critical for conceptualizing cross-border marriages is grounding the notion of economic structure in the historical context and re-thinking the meaning of “the economic” and “labor”, by shedding light on its relation to “the non-economic” categories such as family and care.

2.1.2 Cross-Border Marriage and the Feminization of Migration

Recent studies on cross-border marriage attempt to conceptualize cross-border marriage in the current global context. Constable (2005) asks, “How are such border crossings gendered?” (p. 3). Constable (2005) outlines several major areas: “gendered pattern of cross-border marriage, gendered cultural expectation and imagination of women and men, hypergamy—women marrying up into a higher socioeconomic

group—and gendered agency” (p. 15). Conceptually, Constable (2005) relies on “gendered mobility,” a concept developed by feminist geographers such as Massey (1994) and Pessar and Mahler (2001). Gendered mobility is caused by and contained within the “power hierarchies created through historical, political, economic, geographic, kinship-based and other socially stratifying factors” (Constable, 2005, p. 15). These are useful conceptual orientations, yet they are only suggestive. Studying gendered patterns of cross-border marriage helps describe the phenomenon of gendered mobility, and gendered cultural expectations, hypergamy, and gendered agency are important factors that help explain gendered mobility with regard to cross-border marriage. However, the notion of gendered mobility does not necessarily explain much unless it is fully substantiated by the historical process of creating a “power hierarchy,” which these factors rely on. In other words, a historically grounded political economic research is critical to the concept of gendered mobility.

The concept of gendered mobility is based on observation of the feminization of labor migration. The feminization of labor migration for reproductive labor has been an observable trend since the 1970s. Numerous literatures shed light on its conditions and consequences. One of the most prominent explanations for this trend is the neoliberal restructuring of social services in the Global North (Yeats 2005, Hochschild 2003, Parrenas 2001). During the phase of the decline of the welfare state, the public sector was substantially privatized. Pressure to lower the cost of public services, in particular of care, induced labor migrants into the care sector, which has a high demand for female workers. In other words, the recent trend of the feminization of labor migration indicates the restructuring of the mechanism of providing care, a narrow aspect of social reproduction. If the notion of gendered mobility includes mobility other than labor migration, such as marriage migration, what kind of historical process and power

hierarchy would be behind? Does the feminized stream of marriage migration in Asia also indicate the restructuring of production and social reproduction in some sense?

Hsia (2004) attempts to conceptualize cross-border marriage in the context of capitalist development using a world-system approach to international migration. She argues that cross-border marriage serves capitalist development through various exchanges among the core, semi-periphery, and periphery:

For the core and semi-periphery, foreign brides provide unpaid household labor, childbearing, and child rearing, thereby stabilizing the reproduction of a pool of cheap labor. Foreign brides also serve directly as a new source of cheaper laborers in these countries. For peripheral countries, document and travel fees as well as remittances collected from women from peripheral countries benefit primitive accumulation. In sum, the phenomenon of foreign brides brings together men and women who have been marginalized in core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral societies by capitalist development in order to survive. (Hsia, 2004, p. 193)

Applying the world-system approach of international migration to cross-border marriage helps locate cross-border marriage in the context of current global political economic changes. However, simply replacing labor migration for marriage migration does not necessarily address the specificity of marriage migration, which is different from the labor migration in terms of its political, economic and cultural ramifications¹². While labor migration can be explained in terms of labor supply and demand in the national labor market, marriage migration requires an understanding of the overall social reproduction process of a given society. This concern in part schematically resembles the early feminist discussion on women's unpaid labor in the

¹² There is another attempt to discuss cross-border marriage in parallel with labor migration. Piper (2003) discusses the blurring boundaries between marriage migration and labor migration by focusing on the case of Filipina entertainers' marriages to local Japanese men. This discussion had great potential to answer the question of how to theorize cross-border marriage in relation to the feminization of labor; however, the focus remains the technical changes in the form of migration.

1970s. The point of debate is often summarized as the contribution of women's unpaid labor to capital accumulation. However, what is more important in the debate about women's unpaid labor is acknowledging that family and women's unpaid labor as important part of economic processes and paying attention to the relationship between paid and unpaid labor, market and non-market institutions, and production and reproduction. Gender is indispensable to understanding these boundaries and any changes to them. The reason that Hsia's argument seems somewhat mechanical is that she underestimates the relational aspects of this debate. A detailed theoretical discussion follows in the next section.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: Social Reproduction as a Starting Point for Discussion

Conceptualizing cross-border marriage in the political economic context is challenging because marriage and the family are not necessarily regarded as central part of the economic system and yet this phenomenon is surrounded by political and economic changes. It exists in the intersection of multiple boundaries such as market and non-market, public and private, and production and reproduction. It calls for re-visiting feminist discussions on social reproduction in the 1970s. In what became known as "domestic labor debates", feminists discussed the role of social reproduction in the capitalist production system and its relation to the women's subordination by focusing women's unpaid labor in the family. It re-conceptualized the notion of labor and the family as a social institution in a capitalist political economic system.

Taking this debate further, I review the discussions on family and state as the domains of the social reproduction. I briefly touch upon the discussion of citizenship in relation

to the welfare state because the notion of the social contract between the citizen and the state in the second half of the 20th century is linked to care provision, which is an important mechanism for guaranteeing social reproduction. Furthermore, the recent increase in female labor migration to the Global North is closely linked to the question of care provision. I raise a question of the mechanism for social reproduction in a society where the role of state is relatively small and where family plays a central role. I locate the increase in marriage migration in East Asia and I shed light on the issue of the citizenship in that context with the influx of marriage migrants.

Finally, I discuss recent population history and trends as discursive domain of social reproduction. There are two layers of discussion on population. First, I will explore how the discussion of population has been developed in parallel to that of social reproduction historically. Then I will review how the area of population became important in the discourse of economic development in the second half of the 20th century. Indeed, population is an important area to address the concerns of social reproduction in the economic development plan in Korea. How the concerns of population are linked to the concerns of care and welfare is an important question and cross-border marriage in Korea is a useful example through which to explore this question. Changes in the population structure, accompanied by rapid economic development, and changes in family patterns, have all had effects on current care provision in Korea.

2.2.1 Reproduction as an Ontological Site for Studying Political Economic Changes

Social reproduction is important to exploring gender relations in the political, economic, and socio-cultural arenas and within the institutions of state, market, and family. Edholm *et al.* (1978) discuss three different types of reproduction—social

reproduction, reproduction of labor, and biological reproduction—that correspond to three different theoretical questions:

to what extent women's position and male-female relations are crucial for the reproduction of the social totality, to what extent women's involvement in this sphere is important to an understanding of their position within the society and to what extent this varies from one productive regime to another, how women's reproductive capacities are controlled and whether this control determines the position they occupy in any given group. (pp. 104–105)

Each dimension has been discussed in a different body of literature, although the different bodies are linked to each other. The discussion on the reproduction of labor is directly linked to the domestic labor debate and was developed by feminist economists. Later these debates converged with the discussion of welfare regimes and care regimes by feminist social-policy analysts (Razavi, 2007). The discussion on biological reproduction can be found in the debate on women's reproductive rights and population policy. Finally, the discussion on social reproduction can be found in the feminist debates on democracy and citizenship.

Recent research on social reproduction pays attention to the link between production and reproduction and sheds light on the social reproduction as an ontological site for understanding political economic changes (Bakker and Gill, 2003; Picchio, 1992). In particular, Picchio (1992) discusses how the conceptual separation of production and reproduction in the classical political economy in the 19th Century influenced the ways in which we imagine the market and other social institutions. She takes the price of labor as an example. While earlier theorists such as Ricardo recognized the reproduction cost of labor and integrated the cost into wages, the price of labor was increasingly perceived to be determined by labor market supply and demand in Ricardo's later work and that of others (Picchio, 1992). This indicates that the

concerns of reproduction were externalized from the market. In other words, the labor market is inherently insecure because it ignores the cost of reproducing labor.

However, basic subsistence is essential for the reproduction of labor. Hence, keeping reproduction costs low is critical to profit as well as to labor market stability, and handling the “surplus” labor in the market is also an important issue.¹³

Picchio (1992) suggests that family and state play important roles in maintaining and supporting the labor market by providing basic subsistence for labor and for those who fail to be hired in the labor market. Picchio (1992) shows that the market has disembedded from society through the process of commodifying labor and argues that social institutions such as the family and the state have developed in order to handle this rupture, which occurs in the process of disembedding.

Bakker and Gill (2003) articulate three dimensions of reproduction, which are slightly different from the three types of reproduction that Edholm *et al.* (1978) offer:

- 1) Biological reproduction of the species, and specifically the conditions and social constructions of motherhood in different societies; 2) The reproduction of the labor force, which involves not only subsistence but also education and training; 3) The reproduction of provisioning and caring needs that may be wholly privatized within families, or socialized or, indeed, provided through a combination of the two. (p. 32)

One notable difference is that the third definition is reduced from reproduction of the totality of society to care provision, which illuminates the tangible relation between social reproduction and the institutions of state and family. This shift did reduce the question of social reproduction as an institutional arrangement for providing welfare and care. However, Bakker and Gill’s (2003) focus on the institutional arrangement of

¹³ A more detailed discussion follows later in this chapter.

welfare provision is a fair starting point considering that citizenship is central to social reproduction, that the provision of welfare is directly linked to citizenship, and that the relationship between citizen and state through the medium of welfare provision has been challenged by neoliberal restructuring. Bakker and Gill (2003) take social reproduction as a site from which to observe the changes in production, economic exchange, institutions, social relations, and community. Their strategy provides a more solid point of departure; however, the question of how the discussion of each dimension of social reproduction is linked to the reproduction of the totality of a society in an abstract sense remains unanswered.

The issue of social reproduction is important not only because it is about producing actual people and labor but also because the mechanism of this process is widely embedded in the norms and cultures that define a society (Edholm *et al.*, 1978, Bakker and Gill, 2003, Mitchell *et al.*, 2003). Yet revealing the links between the biological and labor reproduction and the abstract sense of reproduction of society requires a thorough examination of how the reproduction of population and labor is organized. The merit of the notion of social reproduction is that it sheds light on the changing relations between production and reproduction as well as on the relationships among different dimensions of social reproduction. However, using the term “social reproduction” as a bundle of different dimensions without explaining sufficiently how the dimensions of social reproduction are linked may blur the discussion. In this regard, I will use the term “social reproduction” when it refers to the general relations to production. Otherwise, I will use the specific terms “biological reproduction” and “reproduction of labor” when I address these dimensions. In this way, I may be able to show how each dimensions of reproduction is linked to each other as I further the discussion in this dissertation.

2.2.2 Domestic Labor Debate

Feminist debates on domestic labor in the 1970s offer substantial discussion on social reproduction. Molyneux (1979) provides an excellent overview of this debate.

According to Molyneux (1979), there are two important theses in the debate on domestic labor. First, unpaid housework has been regarded as essential to the capitalist mode of production by helping generate surplus value through lowering the cost of labor. This thesis leads to the further argument that women's unpaid labor at home contributes to the subordination of women in a capitalist society. Second, housework is characterized as "non-capitalist" and is regarded as lying outside the sphere of the capitalist mode of production.¹⁴ For an extreme example, Delphy (1976) suggests that there are two distinct and autonomous modes of production: "an industrial mode of production defined by capitalist property relations and capitalist exploitation, and a patriarchal mode of production defined by patriarchal/familiar relations of production and patriarchal exploitation" (p. 6 in Molyneux, 1979).

However, Molyneux (1979) criticizes the narrow economic approach of the domestic labor debate and argues that unpaid housework is not necessarily essential to the capitalist mode of production, because the value of labor is not necessarily determined by economic calculation alone and the ways in which day-to-day needs are met are subject to historical or cultural variation (pp. 9–12). Molyneux (1979) argues that what is important in the debate on domestic labor is not "unpaidness" but "wage," which enables women to stay outside of the labor market. For example, the argument on women's subordination and unpaid labor premises the family wage. However, the workers' wages haven't necessarily supported the reproduction of the family. When

¹⁴ I highlighted these two points from Molyneux's (1979) extensive discussion. Please see Molyneux (1979) for the debate on domestic labor for more details.

the breadwinner's wage is below the family wage, the spouse is likely to enter the labor market or to find a way of sustaining.

The second thesis, that domestic labor has non-capitalist characteristics and stays outside of the capitalist production system, contradicts the first thesis. Molyneux (1979) notes that if domestic labor contributes to lowering the value of labor in the labor market, there must be a link between domestic labor and the capitalist mode of production. Instead of explaining the relationship, Molyneux (1979) points out that domestic labor often has been conceptualized based on the assumption of an ahistorical "domestic sphere." Indeed, while the historical specificity of mode of production is well recognized, housework in the domestic sphere tends to be treated as a fairly fixed concept. While most scholars in the domestic labor debate highlight the universality of domestic labor and its gendered characteristics, Molyneux (1979) emphasizes the historical and cultural differences of its modality. Even though the labor process of housework looks similar across the different societies, the development of technology, the marketization of some of domestic services, and the state's involvement in care provision have changed as changes in the "productive sphere" have occurred (Molyneux, 1979).

Domestic labor debates shed lights on the question of how daily needs are met, the domestic sphere where these needs are met, and its link to the productive sphere. Domestic service is indispensable for reproducing labor whether it is provided in the market or non-market by men or women. Women's unpaid domestic labor in the family is a prominent form of organizing this kind of service. As discussed, it contributes to lower the cost of reproducing labor and this form is closely linked to the women's subordination. As Molyneux (1979) noted, domestic sphere, which is often

regarded as non-capitalist is very part of the capitalist production system and the ways in which daily needs are met in the domestic sphere are subject to the cultural and historical conditions. Hence, the role of the family in the market, the form of the family, the role of women in the family for providing domestic labor and its relation to the women's labor force participation in the market are important questions.

Cross-border marriage is one way of forming the family. As noted in the introduction, the state is actively at times involved in this process. If we hypothesize cross-border marriages as an extension to sustain the mechanism of women's unpaid domestic labor in the family, we need to explore what kind of family this marriage exemplifies and what the demographic and economic conditions are for this phenomenon by reviewing the changes in family patterns, women's roles in the family, and women's labor force participation.

2.3 Domains of Social Reproduction in East Asia

The question of social reproduction in East Asia and its relation to marriage migration requires extensive discussion across the topics of population, family, the welfare state, and citizenship. East Asian societies have experienced rapid industrialization and sociodemographic changes during the last six decades. The family has been the key institution for social reproduction in these societies. Rapid industrialization has led to a variety of sociodemographic changes including low fertility and an aging population. This is linked not only to population size but also to the care of children and elderly people, neither of which belong to the productive labor force. At the same time, it raises the question of institutional responsibilities for care provision and overall social reproduction. Consequently, the family became a locus of addressing this concern. For example, the South Korean government has classified "the functional overload of

family,” which has played an important role in biological reproduction and care provision, as a “new social danger.” How social reproduction has been managed in these societies, how this has changed with the rapid economic and sociodemographic changes in recent decades, and how the recent increase in marriage migration is linked to the discussion of population reproduction, care provision, and citizenship are important questions to explore.

2.3.1 Family as a Site for Observing Changes in the Mechanism of Social Reproduction

The family is an important site for studying social reproduction. There has been a wide range of discussion on the roles and functions of the family in the context of historical changes. Although the family has been regarded as an important institution in capitalist development, it tends to be treated as an ahistorical entity outside of the capitalist system, as Molyneux (1979) points out. The emergence of the modern family with a particular form and function in relation to other social institutions needs to be accounted for simultaneously with the changes in internal dynamics within the family.

Scholars note that the family was increasingly governed through the legal system and that its role and function were increasingly redefined in the nineteenth century in Europe as the labor market developed alongside capitalism (Laslett 1977, Zaretsky 1976, Secombe 1993). It was during this period that the new hybrid form of the public and private was constituted and the repartition of institutional responsibilities was established with the rise of the new sociality (Deleuze in Donzelot, 1979). Family is the milieu where these changes were operating, and they often occurred around the question of labor (Donzelot, 1979). Donzelot (1979) noted that the family transformed

in the nineteenth century both internally and externally by “medical, educative and relational norm to protect children from the old custom” and by family law (p. xx). Family laws helped replace the monolithic authority of the father with a dual regime, the system of “tutelage” and “contract”. Under “tutelage” “these families [were] stripped of all effective rights and brought into a relation of dependence vis-a-vis welfare and educative agents” (p. xxi), and “the contract system corresponds to an accelerated liberalization of relations, both within and outside of the family” (p. xxi).

The relation between family and labor is articulated more explicitly by many feminists (Hartmann 1981, Mackintosh 1981, Picchio 1992, Seccombe 1993). According to Picchio (1992), the institution of the family is important to dealing with the insecurity of reproduction in two ways. First, unpaid housework in the family helps lower the cost of reproduction.¹⁵ Second, the family absorbs the instability of the labor market. The state intervenes through various welfare policies when the stability of the labor market is undermined by high unemployment and low wages. However, the state does not challenge the existing labor market and social organizations fundamentally; rather it reinforces the separation between production and reproduction. In this situation, women who have offered unpaid housework are caught in a dilemma. Their unpaid reproductive work is not recognized and they are regarded as dependent on male wage workers who earn enough to support the family. Thus arises the idea that the male breadwinner and the family wage contributed to women’s low wages in the labor market (Hartmann, 1981).

¹⁵ Later, Picchio (2003) revisits the topic of unpaid labor at home and argues that women’s unpaid labor contributes to improving the standard of living.

Mackintosh (1981) articulates the family in relation to social reproduction in contemporary British society by pointing out that the institution of the marriage-based household serves the role of social reproduction and is highly structured by gender. She emphasizes the reproduction of labor—"not merely the bearing of children but also their care and socialization, and the maintenance of adult individuals through their lives, processes which create individuals to fit more or less into the social structure of society and so ensure the continuation of that society in the next generation" (p. 11). She argues that the activities for reproduction are associated with "natural" women's work, and this gender division of labor between production and reproduction is expressed in terms of gender identity—masculinity and femininity; however, this particular gender division of labor has never been natural. It has been governed under the specific governing structure. The state helps maintain this governing structure through various kinds of legislation. For example, social service provisions in Britain treat women as dependents of men, and legislation on marriage and divorce dictates the allocation of public housing (McIntosh, 1978; Land, 1977 in Mackintosh, 1981, p. 15). In other words, the state has taken part in managing the mechanism of social reproduction, in particular managing the family as we know today, even though the gender norms within the family is often regarded as "natural".

Secombe (1993) raised the question of why the discourse of the crisis of the family is so widespread in contemporary society. He noted that "families change in response to the changes in surrounding society, above all, the shifts in prevailing mode of production and the structure of state authority and provision" (Secombe, 1993, p. 210). He acknowledged that there have been substantial changes in families through fertility decline, rise of divorce, married women's labor force participation, and the improvement of women's legal rights. However, the sense of crisis is often based on

the assumption of an ideal status. Hence, the crisis of the family is the crisis of the ideal or traditional family, which is a recent invention, rising to preeminence in the nineteenth century. In a way, spreading the discourse of the crisis of the family is a process of confirming the traditional family.

2.3.2 Social Reproduction in the Context of the (Non) Welfare State

State and family are important institutions in the current discussion of social policy. Welfare states have been the most prominent entity in the discussion of how services for social reproduction are organized. The emergence and decline of the welfare state has been regarded as a major historical event in terms of the organizing of social reproduction. The meaning of “welfare” is anchored in various levels. The welfare state is one of the mechanisms of distributing the wealth of a society, hence guaranteeing the living standard of individuals. A socialist state can be classified as a welfare state in this sense, but the notion of the welfare state is particularly attached to a social/liberal democratic system and postwar capitalism. The welfare state emerged in a particular historical context between the 1930s and the 1960s in Europe (Esping-Anderson, 1999, p. 33).

Esping-Anderson (1999) differentiates “welfare regime” from “welfare state” by defining a welfare regime as “the combined, interdependent way in which welfare is produced and allocated between state, market, and family” (p. 34). He identifies three major institutions that constitute a welfare regime—state, market, and family—and provides three typologies of welfare regime: “state- biased social democratic regime,” “market-biased liberal democratic regime,” and lastly “family-biased conservative regime” as a response to the feminist critique.

There have been many feminist critiques of Esping-Anderson's work based on its gender-blindness, and yet its schematic structure tends to remain or to be slightly modified. Orloff (1993) points out that the gender perspective is absent in this mainstream welfare-state theory¹⁶ and calls for attention to the impacts of state social provision on gender relations. Orloff's (1993) critique can be summarized as follows: 1) the discussion on social provisions is limited to relations between the state and the market. Hence, the distinction between the public and the private corresponds to that between the state and the market. Families, which play an important role in social provision, are ignored; and 2) the mainstream welfare-state literature assumes that women freely choose to participate in the labor market or to stay at home as housewives and that state services are available regardless. Hence, it ignores the different situations of men and women workers in terms of care labor and access to paid work. Orloff (1993) also suggested that the discussion on welfare state needs to include "access to paid work" and "the capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household." (p.307) These are closely linked to the family wage. Orloff (1993) further elaborates that the strategies of the women's movement to gain economic independence can be examples of indicators to form and maintain an autonomous household—"1) establishing secure incomes for women who engage in full-time domestic work and caring for their children; 2) improving access to paid work and establishing services that reduce the burden of caring on individual households"—in other words, indicators of whether a family wage is guaranteed for full-time housewives and whether the state care provision is offered for married women workers. She adds that these efforts should be coupled with women's political participation. Orloff's (1993) overall critique of the mainstream discussion of welfare state is adequate and useful when we consider the welfare regime in Korea where the

¹⁶ She calls it the "power resource approach" and deals mainly with Esping-Anderson.

family has played an important role and the women's labor force participation was closely linked to the economic structural changes. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

How or why a certain welfare regime has emerged as it is under global capitalism remains unexplored in the welfare and social policy literature. Orloff (1993) acknowledges the emergence of social rights in the capitalist development process, noting that "the development of social rights reversed the 19th century separation of social protection from citizenship. Along with Marshall (1950), scholars of the welfare state and social policy maintain that this critical social transformation took institutional form in a move away from poor relief to modern social policies, like social insurance and universal benefits based on citizenship" (p. 306); however, this account is limited to the European context. The historical differences of other parts of the world have hardly been explored. The degree and pace of integration into global capitalism varies in each economy. However, this process is not unidirectional; hence the experience of this integration is not uniform, even though there may be similarities among countries. For example, Britain's experience of integration into global capitalism would be very different from South Korea's or Vietnam's. If Korea is classified as a family-biased welfare regime, how it emerged as such and how it has changed with regard to the recent neoliberal economic restructuring are important questions.¹⁷

South Korea can be characterized as a family-dependent welfare regime (Lee, J 2005; Ma and Lee, J 2007; Lee, H 1999). It may be close to the familialistic regime of

¹⁷ There have been studies on welfare states in East Asia (Aspalter 2002, Holliday and Wilding 2003, Mishra 2004) and in Korea (Kwon 1999, Lee 1999). However, the discussion tends to remain within the framework of mainstream welfare-state research.

Esping-Anderson's terminology. Esping-Anderson (1999) defined a "familialist regime" as that in which "one assigns a maximum of welfare obligations to the household" (p. 45). However, he does not specify what is meant by welfare obligations. In a similar manner, the term "oikonomic welfare," that is, that "each state's major concern was a good household management based on the faith in the family as a provider of welfare," was used to describe the welfare state in East Asia (Jones, 1990 in Holliday and Wilding 2003, pp. 6–7). In my understanding of a family-dependent regime, the wealth of the society is redistributed through wages to the individual family household and resources are managed for basic care at the level of the family unit. Yoo (2005) noted that "welfare" in Korea depends on workers' wages in the vacuum of other public support, and the redistribution of wealth to individual households is made through the wage system¹⁸ (in Nam 2008).

This form of welfare regime has been dismantled with the economic restructuring in the 1990s. The Korean government's welfare expenditure increased sharply beginning in 1998 after the financial crisis. The irony is that the percentage of wages in total sales in business dropped to before the workers movement. In a way, the state welfare expenditure increased dramatically,¹⁹ but the wages of workers, which had been the major source of individual welfare, decreased. The fact that state responsibility

¹⁸ Also in the Korean literature on social policy, such terms as "Individual Family Welfare" and "Social Network Welfare" are used to describe the characteristics of the welfare regime in Korea (Nam, 2008). Support from the social network was a prevalent characteristic of Korean welfare, and later this was transferred to individual family welfare through the expansion of private insurance (Nam, 2008).

¹⁹ This is an interesting topic, because neoliberal structuring usually aims to reduce the welfare burden of the state, but the Korean government ended up taking on far more responsibility with the restructuring process. Korean scholars have debated whether the Korean welfare state is part of a neoliberal project (See Nam [2008] for more details). However, whether the current changes in the welfare system should be understood as strengthening the state or subordinating the state under the market doesn't seem to be useful to understanding the meaning of this transformation. In my view, it is more important to understand the contexts and the meaning of the implementation of welfare policies at two different points of time as well as how the formation of the working class played an important role in this process.

increased does not necessarily mean that Korea is going to experiment with a European-type welfare state in the post–World War era. This is rather an inevitable intervention in the process of emerging as a more “free” or flexible labor market and a result of the more rigid separation between production and reproduction, which Picchio (1992) discussed. It raises the questions of how the welfare regime has been re-organized in this period and why the Korean state ended up taking more responsibility during the neoliberal economic restructuring.

2.3.2.1 Changing Care Provision in the Context of the Decline of the Welfare State

Feminist economists have observed the growth of the informal economy and the service industry and the feminization of this arena during the last four decades. Although the informal economy and the service industry are not equivalent in terms of scale, and the notion of service is very broad, the growth of the care industry can be understood alongside with the growth of informal economy and service industry (Beneria, 2003). The growth of the care industry is often explained in terms of the decline of the welfare state in the developed world as the welfare state is pressured to reduce its expenditures for social services. This is an important context for the feminization of labor migration in recent decades. Privatization of public services is an important feature of the reorganizing of social reproduction from a state-based to a market-based system. In order to lower costs, migrant workers for the social-service sectors, including care services, have been invited to some countries in the global North. Governmental policies such as the foreign domestic-helpers programs and the foreign care-workers programs in many countries in the Global North indicate that governments engage in this process of lowering the costs of social reproduction in both the private and public spheres. There is greater demand for occupations that have been dominated by women such as nurses, caregivers, nannies, and domestic workers

in the developed world. The migration of care workers from the developing world to the developed world has increased dramatically, as the emergence of the global care chain²⁰ shows. The immobile nature of these services and the pressure to lower their costs have allowed the increase in migration, in particular female migration.

This explains the current trends of the feminization of labor migration plausibly. However, only a handful of societies have experimented with state-based welfare regimes; not all of them have dealt with the post-welfare-state welfare regime in a similar way. How social reproduction is governed outside of Europe has not been explored much, except where a country is directly linked to the recent reorganizing process. Most states are integrated into the global economy. The ways in which social reproduction is organized in various states would be as diverse as the degree and modality of participation in the global economy. How social reproduction in societies that did not experience a welfare state has been organized and reorganized in the recent neoliberal economic restructuring is an important question.

2.3.2.2 Citizenship

As shown in the discussion of the welfare state, citizenship cannot be divorced from discussions of gender, labor, and social reproduction. Citizenship has been a universal ground for the “struggle for redistribution and struggle for recognition,” in Fraser’s (1997, p.16) words, during the post–World War II welfare-state period. However, the discussion on citizenship relied on the idea of a functioning nation-state, needed to shift as the production system was increasingly globalized and the cross-border mobility of people increased.

²⁰ This term describes the global migration circuit for reproduction work (Yeats, 2005).

Recent feminist discussion on citizenship²¹ is interlinked to the discussions on mobility, production, reproduction, and gender. Ong (2006) highlights the emergence of new entitlements that are not necessarily tied to the membership in a nation-state. She argues that “binary oppositions between citizenship and statelessness, and between national territory and its absence, are not useful for thinking about emergent spaces and novel combinations of globalizing and situated variables” (Ong, 2006, p. 499). Her earlier work sheds light on how citizenship operates in a differentiated manner within a national border in the transnational context in the case of workers in a free-trade zone (Ong, 2000). While Ong’s (2000) discussion of citizenship is based on the economic structural changes caused by the international division of labor in the 1960s and 1970s and state–market relations, Lister’s (2007) discussion of citizenship is based on various minorities whose identity have yet to be fully recognized. In a way, this is a continuation of the critique of universality of citizenship and the attempt to reconstitute the universality by theorizing the differentiated form of citizenship in inclusive directions. She sees “care” as a site where “the intimate/domestic and the global tiers of citizenship” are linked (p. 57). She further notes that “a complex web of wage-earning and care is spun by migrant women stretching from the intimate private sphere of their citizen employers to their countries of origin, with implications for the citizenship of all those connected through the global care chain” (Lister *et al.*, 2007, in Lister, 2007, p. 57).

The discussion of citizenship is even more complicated when it comes to cross-border marriage, because marriage migration presumes the attainment of citizenship and status as a wife and a mother in the family. The most common ways of problematizing

²¹ Feminist scholars such as Yuval-Davis (1997) analyze the gendered discourse of national identity and citizenship in relation to changes in the structure and state mechanism. However, Ong (2000) and Lister’s (2007) work seems to directly respond to the economic structural changes and gender.

the citizenship of marriage migrants include addressing the gap between legal citizenship and its actual practice, or adding “cultural citizenship”²² to Marshall’s framework of citizenship, namely political, economic, and social citizenship. Both ideas assume citizenship as a universal ground for claims that can be realized through institutional mechanisms and substantial social changes; hence the issue becomes the increasing institutional capacity of the state. The influx of immigrants sheds light on the “new dimension” of the citizenship discussion and it often deploys the focus of the discussion from the structural problem of re-distribution of the society to the immigrants. Furthermore, the notion of citizenship seems to have been narrowed to a bundle of rights, and the relationship between the citizen and the state seems to be a social contractual one based on what each party can offer. It dismisses the notion of citizenship as a mechanism that generates the membership in the community and its historical constitution in terms of state and market relations. For instance, if the citizenship is merely a bundle of rights, the marriage migrants who are legally recognized as a citizen would not be a topic of discussion. As I argued in the discussion on welfare regimes, it is important to explore how the idea of citizenship or its equivalent has been sustained and constituted in different parts of the world. For example, cross-border marriage in Asia occurred under circumstances of regional economic disparity and the need to solve the specific problems of social reproduction of the receiving countries. Put crudely, marriage migrants may perform unpaid care labor at home and therefore help address the problems of social reproduction in the receiving country. It seems that the starting point of the discussion is often the influx of marriage migrants and that the discussion tends to move towards “discovering the

²² This includes “the right to be ‘different,’ to re-value stigmatized identities, to embrace openly and legitimately hitherto marginalized lifestyles and to propagate them without hindrance. The national community, in other words, is defined not only in formal legal, political, and socioeconomic dimensions, but also increasingly in a socio-cultural one. Full citizenship involves a right to full cultural participation and undistorted representation” (Pakulski, 1997, p. 83, in Lister, 2007, p. 51)

citizenship system” of the receiving society. It dismisses the economic structural conditions under which the marriage migration occurred and what citizenship means in the receiving society, as well as its importance to the discussion of citizenship.

Turner (2008) suggests that cross-border marriage can be a site of contradictions between state and market, which include “the globalization of the economy, the world-wide increase in labor migration, the emergence of international marriages and geographically dispersed families, low fertility and ageing populations and changing definitions of citizenship and legal entitlement” (p. 53). He focuses on the state’s interest in population, that is, “securing and enforcing the historic connection between reproduction and citizenship,” by using the term “reproductive citizenship.”²³ Turner (2008) emphasizes the family as “the social mechanisms for the reproduction of society through the birth, maintenance and socialization of offspring” in the distribution of citizenship entitlements (p. 48). He argues that “the privileged position given to heterosexuality in official discourse is a function of how public policies seek to normalize reproduction as the desired outcome of marriage” (p. 47). In the context of low fertility as well as high fertility, governments intervene in “the private sphere of family, becoming increasingly involved in the management of marriage and reproduction” (p. 47). Noting the increase in cross-border marriage and the recent low fertility in East Asian countries, he notes that cross-border marriage complicates citizenship in modern Asia, where the process of citizenship-building is often found in the process of building a national identity. His idea is very relevant to the theorizing of cross-border marriage and offers points of discussion, but most of it needs to be substantiated with empirical cases. Furthermore, his discussion is mainly based on

²³ This is in conversation with recent discussion on “sexual citizenship.” Turner (2007) sees that “sexual citizenship concerns the rights of sexual consumptions” (p. 53) and proposes reproductive citizenship to capture structural concerns of reproduction.

state intervention in biological reproduction, although he mentions the complex political economic cultural relations around citizenship regarding the link between other dimensions of social reproduction and citizenship eclectically.

2.3.3 Population: Discursive domain for social reproduction

2.3.3.1 Perception of Population and Labor in the Process of Separating Production and Reproduction

Population has been relatively marginal in the discussion of social reproduction even though population is indispensable to the current discussion of economic changes. Population is important because it is linked to the concerns around the labor market, for example, the idea of productive labor, surplus labor, and dependent population. In a way, the field of population represents the ways in which the concern of social reproduction is treated in mainstream economic theory. The most influential conceptual change on population is from Malthus in the eighteenth century. Malthus changed the focus of discussion of labor in the political economy by putting population and food in a numerical equation of the price of labor. He noted that

We will suppose the means of subsistence in any country just equal to the easy support of its inhabitants. The constant effort towards population . . . increases the number of people before the means of subsistence are increased. The food, therefore, which before supported seven millions must now be divided among seven millions and a half or eight millions. The poor consequently must live much worse, and many of them be reduced to severe distress. The number of laborers also being above the proportion of the work in the market, the price of labor must tend toward a decrease, while the price of provisions would at the same time tend to rise. (Malthus, 2004, p. 24)

There are two distinctive ideas in the passage above. One is “overpopulation,” which refers to the excessive increase of population rather than the increase of the means of subsistence. The other is the ways in which the price of labor is determined. Regarding

overpopulation, Marx criticized Malthus for transforming the historically distinct relations into an abstract numerical relation. According to Marx,

overpopulation is a historically determined relation, in no way determined by abstract numbers or by the absolute limit of productivity of the necessities of life, but by limits posited rather by specific conditions of production . . . never a relation to a non-existent absolute mass of means of subsistence, but rather a relation to the conditions of reproduction, of the production of these means, including likewise the conditions of reproduction of human beings, of the total population, of relative surplus population [matter to define overpopulation] (pp. 279–278).

Despite this criticism, the influence of a Malthusian shift on the labor market is important. While Ricardo, a prominent political economist of Malthus' time, tended to see the price of labor as determined by the price of reproduction (natural price), Malthus suggested that the price of labor is determined by the supply and demand of labor (market price) (Picchio, 1992). According to Malthus' argument, labor is merely a commodity in the labor market and its reproduction cost has been overlooked, although Malthus acknowledges that people are raised in families. However, the tension between natural price of labor and the idea of market price of labor has not disappeared. The key issue behind this tension is that how one becomes a labor and who takes care of the reproduction.

Picchio (1992) argues that a set of mechanisms to release this tension has been implemented by the state. For example, the idea of the homogenous family emerged in England around the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the emergence of the capitalist labor market, and it naturalized the family as the basic unit of reproduction and the woman as a homemaker (Picchio, 1992). In the legislative arena, a law for rescuing the poor was implemented with other social-insurance programs (Picchio,

1992). This law evidently showed that the market price of labor failed to deal with reproduction of labor and that the labor market required this kind of state intervention.

2.3.3.2 Population Control as a Global Agenda in the Era of International Development²⁴

The global discussion on population and birth-control campaigns can be traced to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century intellectual currents including eugenics, discussions on quantity and quality of population, productivity of land for feeding a population, nationalism, imperialism, and so forth. The configuration of the intellectual trend and campaign around population has changed over time beginning with the early twentieth century, but it was generally a movement toward the neo-Malthusian idea. There are various ways of periodizing and categorizing the population discourses and campaigns around population.²⁵ However, it was during the post–World War II period that population discourses and campaigns became more closely connected to policy and acquired distinctive characteristics in the United States; the international campaign for family planning also began around this time. I will focus on the postwar period in particular because it was during this time that the Korean government started adopting family-planning programs.

After World War II, the United States launched a vision of international development as the leader of a new world order. The rationale for this vision was as follows: “the

²⁴ The Swedish government initiated a family-planning program in the developing countries in the 1950s, but this section focuses on the context of U.S. international development because economic development and population policy in South Korea are more influenced by the United States.

²⁵ Hodgson and Watkins (1997) focus on the feminist movement and the Malthusian movement within the movement on population and periodize it as –1945, 1945–1965, 1965–1974, 1974–1985, and 1985–1995. Sinding (2007) identifies two major movements on population as the feminist movement and the Malthusian movement and periodize them as 1952–1966, 1966–1974, 1974–1984, and 1984–1994. Greenhalgh (1996) discusses the development of demography and periodizes it as 1929–1945, 1945–1955, and 1960–1980. Lee and Walt (1995) deal with global family-planning campaigns from the perspective of international relations and periodize them as 1950–1974, 1974–1984, 1984, and 1994.

essential fabric which would hold new internationalism together would be a new era of world commerce and trade. An advanced form of capitalism would prevail. The volatility of the business cycle and imperialist excesses of the past would give way to an orderly and humane corporatism based on cooperation and consensus” (Sharpless, 1997, p. 177). One of the key characteristics of this vision is the idea of economic development as national industrialization based on the category of the nation-state, respecting the national sovereignty.

Population control gained prominence in the policy arena in the context of international development assistance in the 1960s as the neo-Malthusian argument—for example, that population growth results in high unemployment, declining incomes, and economic stagnation; or that famine, disease, and deprivation can be managed through managing population size—gained currency (Sharpless, 1997, p. 178). This idea fits in with the concerns of the national labor market, including the number of laborers, the level of wages, and the ratio of the dependent population. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) established a population office in 1964 (La Cheen 1986 in Koivusalo and Ollila, 1997). Since the 1960s, a sizable portion of U.S. nonmilitary foreign aid has been aimed at reducing the fertility of the developing world. USAID became the largest donor to the population program (3.9 billion USD) between 1968 and 1988 (Donaldson and Tsui, 1990). “Population control” became an important component of U.S. foreign assistance by the 1970s (Sharpless, 1996, p. 195). The construction of the idea of population control indicates that population was integrated into the macro political economic concern of international economic development and nation-building in the developing world for the purposes of “securing the world order” (Sharpless, 1996).

There was a dramatic change in population trends in East Asia in the second half of the twentieth century. This is not surprising in light of these countries' rapid industrialization. In particular, the decline of fertility and the changes in family patterns in East Asian countries were conspicuous. While fertility control was an important population-policy agenda during the 1960s and 1970s, by the 1990s and 2000s low fertility had become a national issue in much of East Asia, including Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore, during the 1990s and 2000s. The decline in fertility and family size is closely linked to the concerns of labor and care provision, and it helps explain the active state involvement in issues of marriage and family in these countries.

2.4 Summary: Social Reproduction, Gender, and Mobility

In the beginning of this chapter, I noted that the trends of labor migration and marriage migration are similar. I asked whether marriage migration can be explained in terms of theories of labor migration. I identified two major differences associated with the theorizing of marriage migration: citizenship, and its more subtle economic implications. Although current theories of labor migration offer a general framework for marriage migration, these two points need to be addressed more explicitly. The framework of "social reproduction," with its three dimensions of biological reproduction, reproduction of labor, and reproduction of the totality of a society, offers ground for the theorizing of marriage migration. I briefly presented a discussion of each dimension on how biological reproduction and labor reproduction link to production and reproduction of the totality of a society. Among these discussions, I paid particular attention to the feminist discussion on unpaid domestic work / care

work as a key work for the reproduction of labor. I saw the current discussion on the feminization of labor, the informalization of female labor, and the reorganization of welfare regimes as an extension of the feminist debates on social reproduction in the 1970s.

In particular, the feminization of labor migration is an important phenomenon that is clearly associated with the current economic changes such as the reorganization of the mechanisms of social reproduction, the informalization of female labor, and the feminization of labor. It also reveals some of the relations among gender, production, reproduction, and mobility. Mobility tends to be associated with the power of capital. The mobile nature of capital and commodities, and the immobile nature of labor, has dominated the understanding of the relationship between capital and labor. Feminist economists have focused on women's labor force participation in the global South under the international division of labor in the 1960s. Women's labor force participation continued to increase with the growth of the service industry. What is intriguing about the recent feminization of labor migration trend is that the immobile nature of reproductive services engendered the mobility of workers. For example, people need basic services such as food provision, clean housing, and health care. In an economic sense, mobility serves capital accumulation by reducing the cost of reproduction.

Can marriage migration be placed in the discourse of the feminization of labor migration? As I noted earlier, many of the economic implications of marriage migration are more subtle than those of labor migration, and marriage migration more typically involves the attainment of citizenship and possible biological reproduction. Hence, marriage migration cannot be simply located in the discourse of the

feminization of labor migration. However, it is worth exploring the historical specificity of the processes within a given society. The feminization of labor migration was largely based on the experience of the decline of the welfare state in the global North. Other parts of the world, which relied on different institutional arrangements for social reproduction, may or may not face the same types of problem regarding social reproduction or may deal with their problems in a different manner. For example, in the case of Korea, the family has played an important role in all dimensions of social reproduction. Recent changes in economic structure, labor market, and family patterns have challenged traditional arrangement of social reproduction, resulting in the current crises of population and care. In other words, if countries in the global North dealt with the pressure to lower the cost of care at the moment of the decline of the welfare state through labor migration, countries in Asia, in particular Korea, may choose to deal with the current population and care crisis through marriage migration. This is a question that should be substantiated with thorough studies of the changes in the ways in which social reproduction has been organized in Korean society. I attempt to shed light on some of the relations around social reproduction and cross-border marriage in Korea in this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE:
LOCATING CROSS-BORDER MARRIAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL
REPRODUCTION IN ASIA: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Historical Approach

What B does now can only be explained in terms of its relationship to what A did before in such settings: we have to see it as a moment in a sequence. We are forced to recognize here that it is not social structure as a timeless world of facts or social action as a timeless world of meanings but history that is the proper subject matter of sociology—that structure and meaning are related through action in time.

—Abrams, *Historical Sociology*, 1982, p. 7

The phenomenon of cross-border marriage offers an opportunity to explore historical changes in the political-economic conditions for, meanings of, and relations among categories such as production/reproduction, public/private, market/non-market, and gender. The purpose of this study is not to theorize the universal characteristics of cross-border marriage but rather to draw attention to the historical specificity of the emergence of cross-border marriage between Vietnam and Korea by exploring the concrete structural conditions that led to it.

The historical approach distinctively focuses on processes. In other words, the historical approach does not take social categories as fixed; rather, it pays attention to their constantly changing meaning and to the relations among them. Hence, questions take the form of “why” or “how” rather than “what.” Abrams (1982) points out that as the question changes from “what” to “why,” our sociology becomes historical; but “why” questions should be contained within “how” questions if we are to undertake genuine historical analysis. Exploring these why and how questions is a process of

examining the changing relations and meanings of various social categories. They are not merely conceptual; they are grounded in political, economic, and social change.

Why and how cross-border marriages happen in a grand scale in East Asia at this moment is a primary question of this research. As discussed earlier, it requires the exploration of the political economic changes of both East Asia as a receiving region and Southeast Asia as a sending region. I discuss this issue with the case of marriage between Korean men and Vietnamese women. Mapping out the trends of cross-border marriages in East and Southeast Asia, Jones and Shen (2008) noted it is a visible social phenomenon in this region. In particular, the marriage between Korean men and Vietnamese women increased in a dramatic pace in the 2000s. Considering that Korea is an ethnically homogeneous society and the attitude towards international marriage was rather conservative, if not negative, the dramatic increase in marriage between Korean men and Vietnamese women begs for attention. In addition, the fact that the local government promotes international marriage and that international marriage brokerages were able to proliferate in Korea also requires further scrutiny.

3.2 Data and Ethnography of Statistics

Sociologists analyze a variety of types of data, and each type only serves as a proxy for a social reality. In this research, I use publicly produced data, including statistics, government documents, and newspapers²⁶. This project starts with numbers, which demonstrate the trends of cross-border marriages, the socio-demographic characteristics of the families involved, and the demographic conditions of this phenomenon. However, this project ultimately attempts to connect these data to other

²⁶ These and other data are not free from errors or from the politics of representation. The extent to which the data are incomplete or inaccurate is not known, however.

sources of information about political, economic, and cultural changes in order to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon of cross-border marriage. In order to do so, I have also reviewed policy papers, laws, newspapers, and various types of statistical data produced by the National Statistical Office and the relevant ministries. The full list of secondary data sources I have used in this research is shown in Table 3.1.

Secondary statistical data were used to explain the socio-demographic characteristics of cross-border marriage as well as the demographic and economic conditions in Korea and Vietnam. For the demography of cross-border marriage, foreign-residents surveys from the Ministry of Administration and Security in Korea, annual immigration statistical data from the Ministry of Justice in Korea, various statistics from the National Statistical Office, including vital statistics in Korea and visa statistics from the Korean embassy and consulate in Vietnam, were used. Surveys conducted by government and research institutes including the 2009 National Survey on Multicultural Families were also used as a reference. For the demographic conditions of cross-border marriage, Korean census data (National Statistical Office), Korean agricultural census data (National Statistical Office), Korean vital statistics from the period 1970–2010 (National Statistical Office), Vietnam census data for 1989 and 1999 (General Statistical Office), data from the Statistical Yearbook of Vietnam (General Statistical Office), and Migration Survey (UNIFA) data were used. Statistical data from international agencies such as World Development Indicators, World Bank Gender statistics, and UNICEF country information were also used as a reference. For socioeconomic conditions in Korea, National Finance (National Assembly Budget Office), Time Use Survey (National Statistical Office), National Survey of Fertility, Family Health and Welfare in Korea (Korea Institute of Health and Social Affairs),

Annual Statistics for Women (Korea Women's Development Institute), Annual Statistics for Health and Welfare (Korea Institute of Health and Social Affairs) were reviewed. For general migration trends, the UN International Migration Stock and Global Migrant Origins databases were reviewed.

The archival research in this project is mostly based on newspapers, laws, and policy papers. I gained access to information about pertinent laws in Korea through the Ministry of Government Legislation (<http://www.moleg.go.kr/main.html>). Laws in Vietnam were accessed through the Web resources Vietnam Law and Legal Forum (<http://news.vnanet.vn/vietnamlaw>). Policy papers of the Korean government, published by the relevant ministries including the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, the Ministry of Gender Equality, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Ministry of Public Administration and Security, as well as local councils' minutes, were reviewed. In the case of Vietnam, policy papers published by the government in English were reviewed. Most of these were published by international agencies in conjunction with the Vietnamese government.

Table 3.1 List of Major Statistical Data

Data	Year	Publisher
Korea		
Census	2000, 2005	National Statistical Office
Vital Statistics-marriage, divorce	1992–2006	National Statistical Office
Immigration office data	2000–2007	Immigration office/Ministry of Justice
Agricultural Census	2000, 2005	National Statistical Office
National Finance/Account	2006, 2008	National Assembly Budget Office
Time Use Survey	1999, 2004	National Statistical Office
Child Care Survey	2009	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family
Survey on the Korean Women Farmers	2003	Korea Women's Development Institute/Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery
National Survey of Fertility, Family Health and Welfare in Korea	2003, 2006	Korea Institute of Health and Social Affairs
Marriage Migrants Survey	2006	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family
Foreign Residents Survey	2007, 2009	Ministry of Administration and Autonomy
National Survey on Multicultural Families	2009	Korea Institute of Health and Social Affairs
Annual Statistics for Women	2006	Korea Women's Development Institute
Annual Statistics for Health and Welfare		Korea Institute of Health and Social Affairs
Household Income and Expenditure Survey		National Statistical Office
Wage Structure Survey		Ministry of Labor
Vietnam		
Census	1989, 1999	General Statistical Office
Statistical Yearbook	2005, 2008	General Statistical Office
UNIFA Vietnam		http://vietnam.unfpa.org/publications.htm
International		Webpage
World Development Indicators		http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators
World Bank Gender Statistics		http://genderstats.worldbank.org
UN International Migration Stock		http://esa.un.org/migration
Global Migrant Origin Database		http://www.migrationdrc.org/research/typesofmigration/global_migrant_origin_database.html
UNICEF Country Info		http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/repkorea_statistics.html

3.3 Details of Field Research

Besides the publicly produced data, I also collected data through my own field research. How the data from my field research and my experience in the field needs to be addressed briefly, however. There are several theoretical and methodological concerns that students of sociology grapple with, such as structural–individual relations and multilevel—for example, local, national, and global—analysis. Although I went to the field with a fairly well-defined conceptual framework and research proposal, both were challenged during my fieldwork experience.

The information, which I obtained in the field through the observation and interviews, enriched my understanding of my research subject. It also led me to modify my theoretical framework and my research focus. I discuss some of the details of my fieldwork in this section on methods to explain the process of the field research itself. I also return to it later on to describe my understanding of the process of cross-border marriage.

My field research was conducted in multiple sites in Korea and Vietnam from September 2007 to July 2008. I spent the first month establishing contacts and mapping out the institutional configuration in each country. While I reviewed government documents, policy papers and newspapers, I also talked to numerous people in the governments, NGOs and the academy. The relevant institutions in Korea are summarized in the Table 3.2. Then, I moved to the rural area and conducted participant observation and interviews. My interviews with Vietnamese marriage migrants and their husbands in Korea were conducted in the first phase. I then moved

to Vietnam and visited my interviewees' hometowns and interviewed their family members and neighbors. I was affiliated with the International Organization for Migration in Ho Chi Minh City as an intern. While I was staying in Ho Chi Minh City, I established contacts with the Women's Union, a governmental organization, which is in charge of issues of cross-border marriages. There I reviewed reports published by international agencies and NGOs. Overall, 14 Vietnamese marriage migrants, 11 of their husbands in Korea, 22 parents of marriage migrants, and 15 single women in a primary sending neighborhood were also interviewed²⁷. In addition, I interviewed 3 brokers and observed in the process of marriage brokerage arranged by a commercial agency. In Vietnam, I witnessed Korean bridegrooms' selecting their prospective Vietnamese wives, and joined them on the city tour with their prospective spouses over the course of three days.

²⁷ A full list of interviewees is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.2 List of Relevant Institutions

Korea		
Governmental Organizations and Research Institutes		
Ministry of Gender Equality ²⁸	in charge of general family policies and runs a national network of Marriage Migrants Support Centers	Korea Women's Development Institute
Ministry of Justice	runs the Immigration Office	
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs	traditionally dealt with population and family policies in recent decades	Korea Institute of Health and Social Affairs
Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	sees cross-border marriage in terms of rural bachelor issues	
Ministry of Administration and Security	Started to produce foreign resident survey from 2007	
The Low Fertility, Aging Society Commission	deals with cross-border marriage and multicultural families in terms of national population issues	
The National Human Rights Commission	addresses human rights violations in the process of cross-border marriage and human rights issues within the lives of multicultural families	
National Assembly		
The Committee for Women	deal with issues of marriage migrants and multicultural families	
The Committee for Health, Welfare and Family		
Governmental Program for Multicultural Family under the Ministry of Gender Equality		
Central Office for Multicultural Family Support Centers	Develops and distributes the support program for multicultural family, runs the pilot policy project for multicultural families, trains and evaluates the social workers for the programs, supports the management of local centers, and deals with the public relations	http://liveinkorea.mogef.go.kr/changelocale.do
Local Multicultural Family Support Centers	Offers educational program including Korean language, cultural integration, childcare, job training, and counseling and translating services.	
Emergency Support Center for Migrant Women	Emergency call center for domestic violence	http://www.wm1366.or.kr/

²⁸ The regime changed in February 2008, and the composition and name of the ministry has changed. One of the major change regarding cross-border marriage is that family affair has moved from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (now the Ministry of Gender Equality) to the Ministry of Health and Welfare (now the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs). Later, it was moved back to the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2010.

Table 3.2 List of Relevant Institutions (Continued)

Korea	
Governmental Program for Multicultural Family under the Ministry of Gender Equality	
Pre-departure Orientation Program in Ho Chi Minh City	Awareness program for Vietnamese brides supported by Ministry of Gender Equality in Korea, Women's Union in Vietnam, IOM and run by the Korean Committee for UN Human Rights Policy
Non-Governmental Organizations²⁹	
The Korean Migrant Women's Human Rights Center	started as a support group for women migrant workers in 2001, extended its mission to all migrant women in Korea in 2003 and established a migrant women's emergency hotline service in 2006
The Ansan Immigrant Center	established the Migrant Women Counseling Center in 2005 and Kosian's ³⁰ House in 2000, which engages in the issue of second-generation cross-border-marriage couples.
The Association for Foreign Workers' Human Rights in Pusan	established the Migrant Women and Multicultural Family Center in 2005

²⁹ Before this network of Multicultural Family Support Center was established, a number of local NGOs took care of issues associated with marriage migrants and multicultural families. As this network was established, some of these groups were integrated into this network because funds for Marriage Migrant Support Centers were distributed to the local groups who run programs for marriage migrants. In a way, local Marriage Migrants Support Centers in the network share the same source of funding and a certain schema for supporting marriage migrants; however, the operation of the local center is up to the organization that runs the local Marriage Migrants Support Center. When it comes to the local level, the boundary between the government and NGO is not entirely clear. NGOs who took initiative on the issues around cross-border marriage were those who support migrant workers. Some organizations, such as the Ansan Immigrant Center and the Korean Human Rights Center for Migrant Workers, had a regular gathering among cross-border marriage couples but most of them were couples of female Korean workers and male migrant workers in Korea. As marriage migration increased, the needs for supporting marriage migrants were necessary. In addition, the cases of domestic violence of marriage migrants were often reported to the counseling services of NGOs supporting migrant workers. These NGOs transferred the cases to women's groups because NGOs supporting migrant workers usually offered legal counseling for labor-related issues. However, women's groups who dealt with violence against women did not have enough experience and resources to assist marriage migrants. Gradually, some of the NGOs supporting migrant workers developed their own programs for marriage migrants.

³⁰ This word is composed of the words "Korean" and "Asian."

Table 3.3 List of Interviewees

In Korea				In Vietnam			
Name	Year of Birth/Age	Name	Year of Birth/Age	Name	Year of Birth/Age	Name	Year of Birth/Age
Vietnamese women who married Korean men		Korean Husband and family		Single women		Parents	
VWK1	1984	KH1	44	VW1	1976	VF1	71
VWK2	1983	KF1		VW2*	1989	VM1	53
VWK3	1980	KH2	44	VW3	1987	VF2	1953
VWK4	1986	KH3	48	VW4*	1985	VM2	1950
VWK5	1984	KH4	42	VW5	1977	VF3	1965
VWK6	1984	KH5	40	VW6	1993	VM3	1966
VWK7	1980	KH6	37	VW7	1990	VM4	
VWK8	1973	KH7	39	VW8	1986	VF5	1953
VWK9	1985	KH8	45	VW9	1983	VM5	1958
VWK10	1986	KF2	43	VW10	1978	VM6	1965
VWK11	1984	VM0		VW11	1990	VM7	1958
VWK12	1982			VW12	1990	VF8	1951
VWK13	1983			VW13	1989	VM8	1956
VWK14	1974			VW14	1990	VM9	1964
				VW15	1988	VM10	1947
						VM11	69
						VM12	1957
						VM13	1963
						VM14	40
						VM15	1956
						VF16	1955
						VM16	1961
Brokers*							
BV1							
BK1	43						
BK2							

Note. KH=Korean Husband, KF=Korean Family Member, VWK=Vietnamese Women marriage migrant in Korea, VW=Single Vietnamese Women, VW*=Vietnamese Women who married Korean men but wait for the paper work, VF=Vietnamese Father, VM=Vietnamese Mother, BV= Broker in Vietnam, BK=Broker in Korea

*BV1 and BK1 were interviewed in Vietnam

3.4 Process of Field Research

Initially, I identified three potential field sites, counties in Kyongsang province, Cholla province, and Chungcheong province in Korea, based on the size of their marriage-migrant populations, their environments (rural-urban), and the vitality of their local marriage-migrant support groups. The assessment was made based on the 2006 Marriage Migrant Survey and the media coverage of NGOs. All three are mostly rural areas with large marriage-migrant populations and active local support groups for marriage migrants. Among these factors, the accessibility of the marriage-migrants support group was an important one in choosing the field site because these groups are the focal point where migrant women gather, and it was not easy to contact Vietnamese women who married Korean men without their assistance. I realized that it took a considerable amount of time to build a trusting relationship with the NGO workers and even more time to break the ice with the Vietnamese women who regularly participated in the centers' programs. Eventually, I decided to focus on one place and to spend enough time to establish relationships with before interviewing Vietnamese women.

I decided to do field research in Dangjin county in Chungnam province based on my preliminary research for the following reasons: 1) it has an average-size population of marriage migrants; 2) this county is classified as a rural area but it has a good combination of rural and urban characteristics; and 3) the Dangjin Cultural Center was active in bringing marriage migrants together by offering language and cultural programs, although it gained less media attention than the other two areas in Kyongsang province and Cholla province. The primary purpose of this center is to offer art classes to local residents. Five regular staff members and two other volunteers

worked for this center. Among them, only one staff member and one volunteer are in charge of running the program for marriage migrants. That made it relatively easy to contact the organizer in the center and the Vietnamese participants in the programs.

I joined the Dangjin Cultural Center to work as an intern, and I spent three months there before I conducted interviews. As an intern, I went to the center every day and participated in most of the programs in which Vietnamese women participated, for example, e.g. Korean language class, knitting class, quilting class, cooking class, and child-care class. I also helped organize events for marriage migrants. Several weeks later, I was able to join in casual conversations with the participants, and sometimes I was asked to join their meals or go on an outing to the market after class, or to stay over at their homes.

I combined participant observation with interviews in order to understand the process of marriage migration. Seeing the women's living environment and learning about the center's programs, and the group dynamics in the center were all important.

Furthermore, spending enough time with women before their interviews was also important not only for the quality of interviews but also for ethical reasons.

Researchers are responsible for the ways in which interviewees are represented and none of the researchers are free from the risk of misrepresenting their interviewees.

The best possible way to avoid this risk is by paying close attention to the interviewees and their social context and by spending adequate time with them. Throughout the fieldwork experience, I developed more complete understanding of my interviewees' social backgrounds and their stories. I heard from an organizer of the center that a couple of surveys or short interviews had been conducted previously, but that no one had spent sufficient time with the participants before doing research. The perception

was Given that a few studies had already been conducted, I tried to select people who had not taken part in other interviews among participants at the center.

I helped compile the database of information about Vietnamese participants at the Dangjin Cultural Center. Among 86 registered participants, about 30 participated in programs fairly regularly. I made a short list of 24 based on their background information including family settings, husband's occupation, and year of entry in Korea, and contacted them to ask whether they would be interested in participating in my research. Most of them responded positively at the beginning. Unfortunately, many of those who had arrived in Korea recently and had stayed in Korea less than 6 months later withdrew their acceptance because their husbands were not happy about it. Between December and January I interviewed 14 Vietnamese women who had married Koreans. Although this is a small number of interviews, the narratives began to be repeated and I decided to change the direction of the interview.

A Vietnamese translator who had volunteered for the center assisted me in my research. Her involvement made interviewing much easier because she knew most of the participants very well. She often added background information regarding participants after the interviews. In addition, the center's coordinator, who has played an important role as a mediator of any family conflicts, provided additional information about the family after each interview. Interviews were conducted either at the interviewee's house or at the center, depending on the interviewee's preference. An interview normally took 80 to 120 minutes, but informal conversation over meals or snacks continued often for hours after the interview. Interviews were conducted in Korean by me and translated into Vietnamese by a translator. Most interviewees preferred to speak in Vietnamese, but sometimes they spoke in Korean as well.

Interviews were audio-recorded if interviewees permitted, and I also took notes during the interviews.

After each interview, the summary of interview was written in English and the contents were cross checked with the translator. Audio recordings were partially transcribed. Although the interviews were very informative, I realized that interviews are one method for opening up other conversations and relationships. Once the interviews were conducted, I was able to have more intimate conversations with the interviewees and to participate more often in informal gatherings. Much of this experience was written in the field notes that I kept every day in Korean. I also had chances to talk with interviewees' husbands and family members. I added notes about conversations at the end of interview notes or field notes. The interviewing of Korean husbands and in-laws of Vietnamese women unfolded naturally. I interviewed 8 Korean husbands and 2 in-laws.

Reducing boundaries between interviewer and interviewee is clearly important in this type of research. I had to struggle between distance and immersion, however. Initially, I had concerns about when to ask certain questions and in what way. When I spoke with the interviewees' Korean husbands or in-laws in Korean, this concern became more acute. Given my social location, I often found it more difficult to talk with Korean husbands than with Vietnamese wives. This may be because I did not have a chance to get to know the Korean husbands, however I met their wives on a regular basis for three months. I also felt certain that different sets of norms were operating between their (older, less-educated, working-class) Korean husbands and me, a (single, younger, highly educated, female) researcher, at least in a subtle way.

After conducting all the interviews, I contacted people in the rural part of Dangjin and stayed there for a week. Although I conducted research at the Dangjin Cultural Center which was located in the urban part of the county and often visited my interviewees' house, I felt that it is important to stay in the rural area for certain period of time and to understand the social life in the rural community. The visit helped me gain a real sense of their isolation, both physically and emotionally. Since it was winter, most of the old people, who are the majority of residents, gathered together in a town hall. I was able to spend some time talking with them, about agriculture and cross-border marriages there in the town hall.

I also conducted research in Vietnam from February 2008 to June 2008. I was based in the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Ho Chi Minh City from February to May. I strategically chose IOM as a host institution because the IOM in Ho Chi Minh City was running the pre-departure orientation program for Vietnamese women who married Korean men and because it has archived substantial migration research, including that pertaining to marriage migration. Moreover, it was important that their working language is English since I am not fluent in Vietnamese. The Vietnamese staff members at IOM assisted me in arranging a meeting with the Women's Union; they gave me very helpful advice when I met with interviewees in rural areas, and they helped me deal with Vietnamese governmental organizations. The first two months were spent conducting library research, institutional mapping, and preparing for interviews. Due to my Vietnamese-language constraints, I focused on reviewing the available English literature. The library of the IOM in Hanoi was a good source of Vietnamese government publications in English and other publications on Vietnam by various international organizations. I also contacted relevant ministries and government organizations such as the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social

Affairs (MOLISA), the Viet Nam Committee on Population, Family and Children (CPFC), and the Women's Union to gain more information; Unfortunately, it turned out that contacting the governmental organization was often not very useful because sharing government information with the public was not common at the time.

Among these governmental organizations, the Women's Union deals with the issue of cross-border marriage directly with the assistance of the Ministry of Justice and the police department. In Vietnam, commercially arranged marriages are illegal. The only institution authorized to deal with cross-border marriage is the Women's Union. It is a national popular organization that reaches to the grassroots level. Currently, nine Marriage Support Centers are in operation in Vietnam under the supervision of the Women's Union. Marriage Support Centers assist cross-border marriages legally, in other words, without commercial transactions. However, these centers are not active enough to replace the commercial brokerage industry.

Some governmental and nongovernmental research institutes have published papers on this issue. The Southern Institute of Social Science and the Institute for Social Development Studies have conducted research on cross-border marriage between Vietnamese and foreign nationals. In addition, a number of international organizations or NGOs, including IOM, Action Aid, Mobility Research and Support Center have worked on the issue of trafficking. In Vietnam, cross-border marriages are often discussed in the context of trafficking in women.

There are several Korean NGOs who do transnational work regarding marriage migration in Vietnam. They work in both Korea and Vietnam and have launched new programs for Vietnamese marriage migrants. The Korea Center for United Nations

Human Rights Policy and the International Organization for Migration in Ho Chi Minh City have launched a pre-departure orientation program for Vietnamese marriage migrants with the cooperation of the Ministry of Gender Equality and the Vietnam Women's Union in 2007. Since I was working closely with these groups, I was able to access various data including a survey of Vietnamese participants of the program. There are other Korean NGOs that are based in Hanoi. For example, the Vietnamese Women's Culture Center started its program in 2007 in Korea and opened an office in Vietnam in 2007. The Korean Foundation also opened an office in Vietnam and launched a pre-departure education program in Hanoi in 2007.

The role of the Korean consulate in Ho Chi Minh City was important because nearly 80% of the visas for Vietnamese marriage migrants are issued there. Even a "marriage migrants support officer" was sent to this consulate from the Korean government. Since I was based in IOM, I was able to establish a working relationship with the Korean consulate. I was able to attend various meetings and workshops on the issue of cross-border marriage, organized by the Korean consulate. I occasionally spent a whole morning either sitting in front of or inside the Korean consulate to observe the crowds who were visiting the consulate for visas. Occasionally, some casual conversation happened with Vietnamese women who had married Koreans or Vietnamese workers who had been working in Korea.

The Korean community in Vietnam illustrates one form of the cultural exchanges between Korea and Vietnam. It is relevant as a contributing factor for migration. Although learning about the Korean community in Vietnam was not part of my research agenda, as a Korean, I learned about it anyway. The Korean community in Vietnam is quite large. It is also physically visible because Koreans live in particular

areas, for example, the newly built cities near Ho Chi Minh City such as Phu My Huong and An Phu. The representation of the Korean community in Vietnam is overwhelmingly associated with wealth, modernity, and development. I talked with people in the Korean community in Vietnam from the Korean consulate, the Korea Trade-Investment Promoting Agency (KOTRA), and Korean international schools. I also visited a private Korean-language institute and talked with a manager because the mobility toward Korea, including labor migration, study abroad, and marriage migration, is well understood there. The popularity of the Korean-language school indicates the sentiments about Korea among young Vietnamese.

During the research period in Vietnam, four of the Vietnamese women I had interviewed in Korea visited their families in Vietnam. While they visited their families, they invited me to join their trips in Thu Duc, Tay Ninh, Can Tho, and Dong Nai. Often I stayed at their parents' houses for several days or more as a Korean friend of their daughters. It was a great chance to observe and participate in the lives of their families and neighborhoods. Since a significant number of my interviewees in Korea came from the Tay Ninh area, I decided to interview families and neighbors there. Tay Ninh is about two hours away from the Ho Chi Minh City and had been one of the biggest sending regions of brides in Vietnam until the local government took a restrictive policy towards cross-border marriages in the late 2000s. I also decided to interview the family and neighbors of one of my interviewees near the Ho Chi Minh City area in order to compare the experiences and attitudes of people in the rural and the urban areas. I interviewed one interviewee's mother and two sisters and two of their neighbors (four single young women) in the urban area. Interviewing people in the urban area went well, without any trouble from the Vietnamese authorities. For example, my interviewee's family did not report to the police that I stayed overnight in

their house; however, I had to report to the local authority when I visited some parts of Tay Ninh.

To conduct research in Vietnam as a foreigner, I needed to obtain permission from the Vietnamese authorities. Consulting with other researchers, I found that the standard is not applied equally. I learned that authorities are not very concerned about researchers interviewing people in urban areas but that interviewing people in the rural areas is another matter. Hence, I contacted a local authority in charge of this issue, in this case the Tay Ninh Women's Union, with the assistance of IOM. I submitted a written research proposal and questionnaire. One of the Vietnamese women who had married a Korean man had been killed in Korea around that time,³¹ and cross-border marriage had become an extremely sensitive issue. The Tay Ninh Women's Union asked me to obtain approval from the Central Women's Union in Hanoi. With the efforts of various IOM staff members, I finally met with an officer in Hanoi, explained my research and assured her that my research would follow the protocols of the Internal Review Board of the Cornell University and adhere to an ethical code of conduct. It typically takes about three months from the time you contacted them until you were able to schedule interviews. The Women's Union had the power to permit or disallow my interviews, and there was very little room for negotiation. I suggested to the Women's Union the number of interviewees, the criteria of interviewees, and the length of interviews. However, I was not given adequate detailed information about my interviewees until I arrived in Tay Ninh.

When I arrived at the Tay Ninh Women's Union, the translator and I were introduced to the chair of the Tay Ninh Women's Union and we then moved to the village, where

³¹ It was reported as a suicide but some suspected that it was a murder.

local union members recruited interviewees with two officers. When we arrived at the house of one of the local Women's Union members, 5 mothers whose daughters had married foreign men (1 Taiwanese and 4 Korean), 5 single women, and 6 local women's members were waiting for us. Since we had arrived with two Women's Union members and since two members of the Department of Foreign Affairs joined later, 10 people from the government were present as observers. Ten observers were sitting on one side facing 10 interviewees on the other. I suggested changing the seating arrangement, but they said that they were fine with this. In addition to the odd physical setting, I experienced huge time pressure because all the interviewees were waiting there. I did not feel that I could keep them there all day, although I was permitted to do so. Due to the time constraints, I decided to conduct a group interview. I split the interviewees into two groups, mothers and single women. First I conducted the interview with the group of mothers and then with the group of single women. I asked a question and each individual in the group answered a question. Sometime, participants developed a conversation among one another. The first group interview lasted about two hours and the other one lasted about an hour. After the interviews, I compared notes with my translator and wrote interview notes. The interview went surprisingly fast compared with interviews I had conducted before. I assume that this is because they were prepared for the interview with the submitted questionnaire. It was hard to verify their answers because I had never met them before and because my translator and I were not allowed to stay in the village.

After this interview, I thought that it was important to have another set of interviews in which authorities would not be involved. I decided to visit the families of the marriage migrants whom I interviewed in Korea and to conduct interviews if possible. Arranging interviews with the interviewees' parents and their neighbors was relatively

easy, since I had made an informal visit when some of my interviewees visited their families. The flow of interviews was very different, too. It took much more time to go through semi-structured interview questions because they like to talk about their daughters. I interviewed 16 mothers or fathers whose daughters had married Korean men, including my interviewees' families, and one mother whose daughter had married Taiwanese men. I also interviewed six single women in my interviewees' families or neighborhoods. Three of them turned out to have been introduced to a Korean man or married to Korean men but had waited nearly a year to depart for Korea. Interestingly, it did not seem as though it would happen anytime soon.

After the contract with IOM was over, I was able to contact several Korean marriage brokers. I found them through the internet and Korean magazines, which are circulated in the Korean community in Vietnam. It was tricky to meet them in Vietnam because commercially arranged marriage is illegal there, as are commercial marriage brokerage agencies. I started contacting people in "the gray area", namely those who assist with paperwork. Then my search extended to those who arrange the meetings and marriages in Vietnam. Arranging a meeting for cross-border marriage is illegal if a commercial transaction is involved. Since, this type of match making was happening in Vietnam, I felt I had to contact them in order to observe the process. I was able to follow the journey of one group from their departure at the Tan Son Nhat airport in Ho Chi Minh City to the marriage process in Ho Chi Minh City for three days. While I was following them, I was able to conduct a long interview with the brokers.

Once I had returned to Korea, I visited my original field site again and caught up with my interviewees and some of their husbands. I felt that the relationship with them had improved after my time in Vietnam. First, I was able to appreciate where they came

from. Second, I received a lot of support from them and their families while I was in Vietnam. Those experiences changed the nature of my relationship with them. They were curious about my experience as a foreigner in Vietnam and what I thought about Vietnam. Also, I felt that my relationship with their husbands had changed significantly because we had had quite lengthy conversations in Vietnam when they visit their family in law. As I had been the only other Korean speaker in the group, I had been able to speak with them more.

During the course of the next month, I conducted further research on the marriage broker industry in Korea. There are several associations of matchmakers: the Korean–Foreigner Matchmakers Association, the Korea Wedding Counselor Association, and the Marriage Consultant Association. I interviewed a vice president of the Korean–Foreigner Matchmakers Association, which explicitly addresses cross-border marriages as a major area of business. Assessing the scale of the broker industry is not an easy task. So far, Internet measurement has been widely used to measure the scale of the industry. However, the Act to Regulate Marriage Brokerage Agents (Act. No. 8688) was implemented in June 2008. It required marriage brokerage companies to register by September 15, 2008. As of 2008, 763 international matchmaking agencies had registered and 203 registration certificates had been issued, and the reviewing process was in progress (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, 2008).

3.5 Some Issues of Analysis

One question that is increasingly raised in the social sciences is how to treat the “nation-state” category. In the conventional academic literature of the social sciences, “nation-state” has been treated as a given, fixed category. This has been criticized by critical sociologists, historians, anthropologists, political scientists, and geographers.

In particular, Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003) has discussed “methodological nationalism” and migration research. Methodological nationalism is deeply rooted in the academy, and it often limits our understanding of current transnational processes. Furthermore, due to the way in which data and academic literature are produced, any attempt to study social phenomenon, especially migration, cannot escape methodological nationalism. Nonetheless, I found it extremely challenging to deal with cross-border marriages without using the nation-state category. As the term “cross-border marriage” indicates, it presupposes the border between two states. It is impossible to describe the phenomenon without acknowledging the state category. As the state is indispensable to discussions of the modern world, cross-border marriage itself is a modern phenomenon. The way that I structure the chapter on demographic conditions is very much based on the state category; furthermore, the data were collected by national statistical offices. The extent to which using national statistics and organizing chapters based on the state category influences our way of thinking about certain social phenomenon is still debatable. However, if our goal is to understand global political-economic processes in the case of cross-border marriages, and if we acknowledge that the mechanism, role, and meaning of the state are constantly changed in this process, the fact that we use national statistics and organize chapters based on the state category will not change our understanding dramatically.

Despite my initial optimism, describing the demographics of cross-border marriages was another not an easy process. I examined the demographic characteristics of Korean–foreign couples with those of Korean–Korean couples to find “meaningful” comparison. Whether I intended it or not, I could not be free from the idea that I am participating in the process of generalizing Korean–Korean couples and particularizing Korean–foreign couples through this comparison by using Korean-Korean couple as a

standard reference point. In addition, the way in which these couples are particularized is very much associated with negative qualities such as low income and low education. As foreign spouses gain the Korean citizenship, these Korean-foreign couples became Korean–Korean couples legally. In other words, the way that data are collected is very much based on the ethnic division. I do not have an answer for how to reconcile this uneasiness, but it is worth acknowledging the trouble.

3.6 Summary

This research asks a question of why and how cross-border marriages happen in a grand scale in East Asia at this moment. Answering this question requires examining not only the phenomenon of cross-border marriages, but also the processes of changing social structure. I introduced various types of data, which I used in this research, including statistical data, archival data, and ethnographic data. Each type of data has its own limitation in terms of representing social reality. I attempted to triangulate these data and to understand the fuller picture of the phenomenon. The numbers from the statistical data tell as much stories as the interviews from the field work. In order to understand the meaning of these, historical and structural context needs to be linked. While different kinds of data complement each other, the picture with various data may be messy and often contradictory. However, this kind of contradiction and messiness lead us to further the initial questions. A new set of why and how question have emerged in the process of identifying the gap and seeking further explanation.

CHAPTER FOUR:

UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT: STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS OF CROSS-BORDER MARRIAGE IN KOREA AND VIETNAM

4.1 The Scale of the International Marriage Market between Vietnam and Korea

Cross-border marriages between Korean men and foreign women started in the late 1980s and increased dramatically during the 1990s. In 2009, 167,090 marriage migrants³² were living in Korea, 149,853 were women³³ (Ministry of Administration and Security, 2009). The countries of origin for marriage migrants include China, Vietnam, Japan, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Uzbekistan, among others (Table 4.1). Marriages between Korean men and Chinese women, predominantly ethnic Korean Chinese, were dominant in the 1990s, and marriages between Korean men and Vietnamese women increased dramatically in the 2000s; Vietnamese women quickly became the second largest group of marriage migrants (Figure 4.1). The overall decrease in cross-border marriages that occurred in the late 1990s can be explained as follows. First, economic uncertainty after the economic crisis of 1997 may have contributed to a decrease in cross-border marriages. Second, there were growing concerns about fraudulent marriages to Chinese women beginning in the mid-1990s³⁴. The concern was that marriage was being used as a means to attain a citizenship for

³² According to the Immigration Office, a “marriage migrant” is a foreigner who has Korean spouse. It doesn’t differentiate between foreigners who come to Korea with a spouse visa and those who arrived with another visa and married later in Korea. This number includes marriage migrants who attained Korean citizenship.

³³ Among these, 2,047 men and 39,370 women attained citizenship.

³⁴ Beginning in November 1993, marriage fraud was extensively covered in Korean newspapers (Seoulsinmun 1993-11-09, Segyeilbo 1993-11-09, Seoulsinmun 1993-11-10, Dongailbo 1993-11-10, Seoulsinmun 1993-11-11, Kyoungghayngsinmun 1993-12-01, Kukminilbo 1993-12-02, Dongailbo 1993-12-02, Kyoungghayngsinmun 1994-1-04, Seoulsinmun 1996-01-31). The Immigration Office decided to investigate marriage fraud and to deport any violators found (Kyoungghayngsinmun, Hangyere, Hankukilbo, Seoulsinmun, Dongailbo 1993-11-30). In 1994, the court gave a decree of nullity in the case of a Chinese woman who married a Korean man and left his home after 5 months (Kukminilbo 1994-10-04, Segyeilbo, Seoulsinmun, Dongailbo 1994-10-05).

Korean Chinese women. As marriage fraud became an issue, the Korean and Chinese governments signed a memorandum of an agreement on cross-border marriage procedures in 1996.³⁵ In addition, the Korean government amended the Nationality Law in 1997 and implemented it in 1998 (Lee, 2005, p. 82). Previously, foreign women attained Korean citizenship as soon as they married Korean men, but the amended Nationality Law stipulated that they must stay in Korea for 2 years before applying for citizenship (Nationality Law 6.2). However, the number of cross-border marriages increased again beginning in 1999, when wording on the regulation of the marriage brokerage industry was deleted from the legislation.

The number of cross-border marriages increased even more beginning in 2003. The trends after 2003 vary depending on the brides' nationality. In the case of China, the abolishment of the memorandum between Korea and China in 2003, mentioned above, contributed to the increase of cross-border marriages after 2003, but they decreased significantly in 2006. According to a National Statistical Office analysis the announcement of implementing the visiting-worker permit for Korean diasporas in both China and the former Soviet Union in 2007 and the foreseen opportunity for labor migration contributed to the decrease in marriage migration (Result of Marriage Statistics in 2006, National Statistical Office). In the case of Vietnam, there are many contributing factors, but the following two points are widely speculated by NGO workers and brokers, although not yet proved. The application process for acquiring a Taiwanese visa through marriage became more difficult in 2005. The interview process changed from a group interview to individual interviews, and the rejection rate

³⁵ According to this memorandum, each party must notarize the marital status of the prospective husband and wife, and the marriage must be registered and notarized by each government. Only after this notarization process can a Chinese bride can apply for a Korean visa. This memorandum was abolished in 2003, and couples now must only report the marriage to each government without notarization and apply for a visa (Shindonga Magazine 2006, vol. 557, pp. 140–145).

was about 30% (Chen, year not listed). Korean-Vietnamese marriages peaked in 2005. In addition, the implementation of a work-permit system³⁶ in 2003 may have contributed to the increase in marriage migration to a certain extent because the system works based on the demands by the employers in Korea and male workers are preferred in the sectors such as agriculture, construction and machinery in Korea. The Vietnamese women's opportunity for labor migration became more restricted with the new work-permit system.

Table 4.1 Marriages between Koreans and Foreigners, by Gender, 1990–2006

Year	Total marriages	Marriages between Korean nationals and foreigners		Foreign husbands
			Foreign wives	
1990	399,312	4,710	619	4,091
1991	416,872	5,012	663	4,349
1992	419,774	5,534	2,057	3,477
1993	402,593	6,545	3,109	3,436
1994	393,121	6,616	3,072	3,544
1995	398,484	13,494	10,365	3,129
1996	434,911	15,946	12,647	3,299
1997	388,591	12,448	9,266	3,182
1998	375,616	12,188	8,054	4,134
1999	362,673	10,570	5,775	4,795
2000	334,030	12,319	7,304	5,015
2001	320,063	15,234	10,006	5,228
2002	306,573	15,913	11,017	4,896
2003	304,932	25,658	19,214	6,444
2004	310,944	35,447	25,594	9,853
2005	316,375	43,121	31,180	11,941
2006	332,752	39,690	30,208	9,482

(Source: National Statistical Office)

³⁶ The work-permit system and visiting work permits for diasporas are two different systems. The work-permit system was introduced in 2003 and implemented in 2004. There was a consideration for Korean diasporas within the work-permit system, but visiting work permits for diasporas, particularly in China and countries of the former Soviet Union, made the border-crossing process and working easier. The employment sectors were expanded as well (Ministry of Justice, 2007).

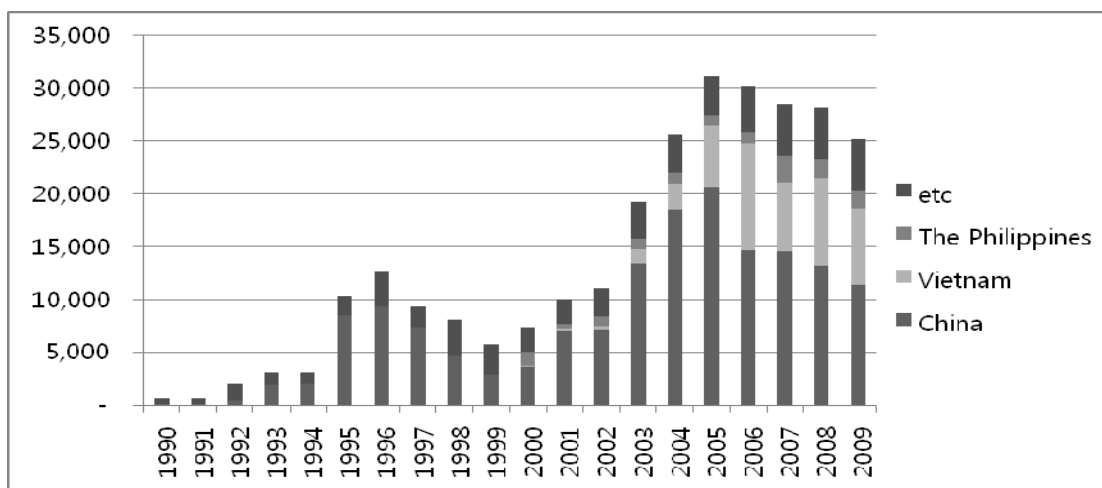


Figure 4.1 Cross-border marriages between Korean men and foreign women, by nationality and year (Source: National Statistical Office)

Table 4.2 Border Marriages between Korean Men and Foreign Women, by Nationality and by Year

Korean men and Foreign women									
Year	Japan	China	US	Vietnam	The Philippines	Mongolia	Cambodia	Uzbekistan	Other
1990	175	88	268	*	*	*	*	*	88
1991	224	106	232	*	*	*	*	*	101
1992	1,223	429	249	*	*	*	*	*	156
1993	826	1,851	230	*	*	*	*	*	202
1994	561	2,043	227	*	*	*	*	*	241
1995	1,412	8,450	188	*	*	*	*	*	315
1996	2,370	9,271	228	*	*	*	*	*	778
1997	1,075	7,362	213	*	*	*	*	*	616
1998	1,004	4,688	1,514	*	*	*	*	*	848
1999	1,248	2,883	280	*	*	*	*	*	1,364
2000	1,131	3,586	235	95	1,358	77	*	43	779
2001	976	7,001	265	134	510	118	*	66	936
2002	959	7,041	267	476	850	195	*	183	1,046
2003	1,242	13,373	323	1,403	944	318	19	329	1,263
2004	1,224	18,527	344	2,462	964	504	72	247	1,250
2005	1,255	20,635	285	5,822	997	561	157	333	1,135
2006	1,484	14,608	334	10,131	1,157	594	394	314	1,192

*included in “other” category

(Source: National Statistical Office)

4.2 The Marriage Squeeze in Korea

The term “marriage squeeze” describes “the effects of an imbalance between the number of males and females in the prime marriage ages” (Schoen, 1983, p. 61), and is generally measured by examining the sex ratio (the number of males per 100 females) at these ages (Schoen, 1983, p. 62). Although early research on marriage squeezes often focused on numerical differences between men and women, recent analyses have also considered compositional matters such as availability of suitable spouses by education level and within geographically based marriage markets. Fossett and Kiecolt (1991) discussed other considerable factors such as geographic accessibility, race, marital status, and labor force status for their research on sex ratios and family formation. Williams *et al.* (2006) discussed marriage squeeze in terms of education and occupation in both urban and rural settings. This change in approach suggests that the understanding of the term “marriage market” may have changed. In general, the marriage market loosely refers to the population pool at the prime marriage age but does not highlight the various characteristics of this population, such as level of education and income that may stratify the market. Recent research has taken account of other characteristics besides age. These attempts result in a more dynamic understanding of marriage markets.

The average sex ratio at birth from 1970 to 2005 is 109.89 in Korea (National Statistical Office, Trends in Vital Statistics 1970–2005). It belongs at the high end of the natural sex ratio at birth (104–110) (Weeks, 2005, p. 327). Park and Cho (1995) discussed the relationships among the imbalance of the sex ratio at birth, low fertility rates, and son preference in Korea. According to them, the son preference persisted in Korean society while the fertility rate decreased rapidly and the norm of a small family became established (Park and Cho, 1995). Because technologies for

determining the sex of fetuses and sex-selective abortion were available, they contributed to the distortion of the sex ratio at birth (Park and Cho, 1995). Park and Cho (1995) pointed out that one of the social implications of the high sex ratio is the marriage squeeze. They predicted the bride shortage, as Table 4.3 shows. They also counted the marriage age gap, four years on average, between the bridegroom and bride. Assuming ongoing very low mortality for both sexes, and assuming that age is the only factor in marriage, males ages 5 to 9 would have difficulty finding a partner when they reach marriage age; in other words, they predicted that 27 out of 100 males would not be able to find a partner (Park and Cho, 1995, p. 74). This situation will worsen if surplus males in the older age group find partners in the younger female age group because of the sex-ratio imbalance of their own age group (Park and Cho, 1995, p. 74). In addition to the sex-ratio imbalance, the rapid decrease in fertility has also contributed to the marriage squeeze. Given that Korean men usually marry younger women and that the absolute number of births has been decreasing, a marriage squeeze on men has appeared unavoidable (Park and Cho, 1995, p. 75).

Table 4.3 Comparison of the Number of Males in Five-Year Age Groups with the Number of Females Four Years Younger in 1990 (Park and Cho, 1995, p. 75)

Males		Females		M/F (* 100)
Age	Number	Age	Number	
25–29	2,160,912	21–25	2,073,159	104.2
20–24	2,294,290	16–20	2,220,129	103.3
15–19	2,267,129	11–15	1,926,386	117.7
10–14	2,054,494	6–10	1,959,426	104.9
5–9	1,999,901	1–5	1,573,958	127.1

Park and Cho's (1995) study predicts a marriage squeeze in Korea based on the population structure in 1990. In order to understand the marriage squeeze in relation to cross-border marriage more accurately, various factors that reflect structural conditions and influence gender relations, including age, education attainment, occupation, residence (urban/ rural), and cultural norms, should be accounted for. For example, according to Park and Cho's (1995) general description based on age, Korean women should not face any problem in finding partners. As Table 4.4 shows, however, the proportion of never-married men and women varies according to education level.

Jones (2004) indicates that "the marriage squeeze [in East and Southeast Asia] leaves well educated women and poorly educated men 'stranded' in the marriage market" (in Williams *et al.*, 2006, p. 87). 2005 Census data³⁷ in Korea support this thesis. A high proportion of women who never married tend to attain higher education levels; on the other hand, a high proportion of men who never married tend to attain a high school education or less, as Figure 4.2 shows.

³⁷ Aggregate census data for the population by sex, detailed education level, and marital status are available from the 2005 census.

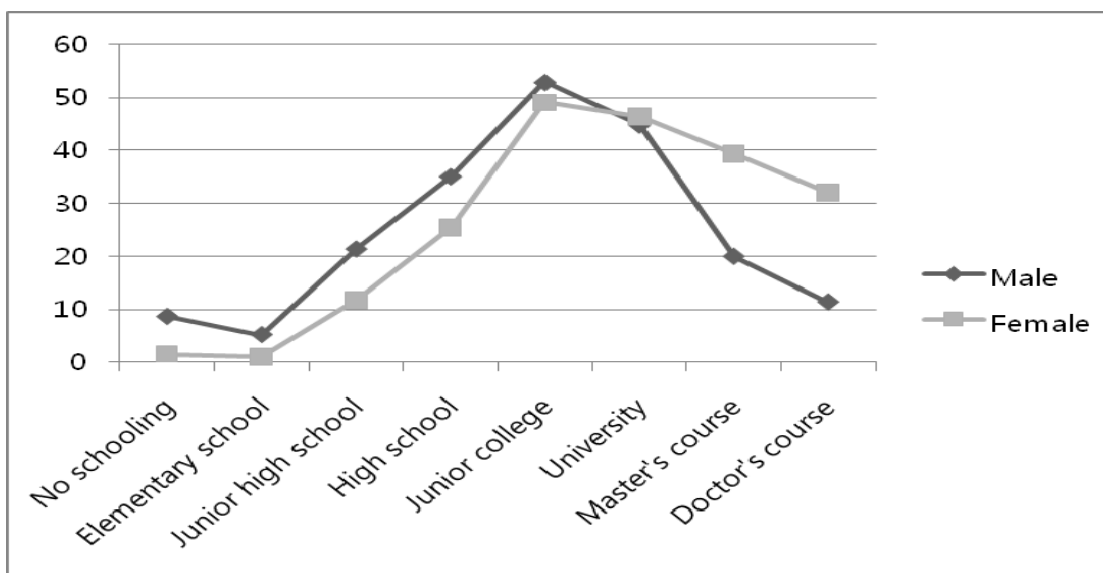


Figure 4.2 Proportion of Never-married Population, by Education and Gender*, 2005

(Source: National Statistical Office)

*age of 15 or older

Table 4.4 Proportion of Never-Married, by Age, Gender, and Education, 2005

Male								
	Total	20 to 24	25 to 29	30 to 34	35 to 39	40 to 44	45 to 49	50 to 54
Elementary	6	93	83	70	51	29	13	5
Secondary	33	95	75	43	23	10	5	2
Tertiary	44	99	85	39	13	5	2	1
No Schooling	10	97	94	88	73	53	34	19

Female								
	Total	20 to 24	25 to 29	30 to 34	35 to 39	40 to 44	45 to 49	50 to 54
Elementary	1	72	48	23	9	3	1	1
Secondary	23	83	44	15	6	3	2	1
Tertiary	47	97	66	23	10	6	5	5
No Schooling	10	90	79	60	39	20	9	4

* percentage of the never-married within the cohort

** includes attending and dropping out

(Source: National Statistical Office)

As Jones (2004) noted, the marriage squeeze is observed at both ends of the education-level spectrum; highly educated women and poorly educated men tend to remain unmarried. The rural bachelors' marriage crisis is one manifestation of the marriage squeeze on poorly educated men. Given the positive relation between education and income levels in Korea³⁸ and the tendency for women to have to "marry up", the marriage squeeze on low-income males is predictable. The recent expansion of cross-border marriage to urban men may also be read in this context and will be discussed later in the thesis.

4.3 Marriage of Rural Men as a National Issue and Cross-Border Marriage in Korea

4.3.1 The National Discourse of the Marriage of Rural Bachelors

In 1990, newspapers³⁹ reported six suicides of rural bachelors. According to the newspapers, these farmers committed suicide because they were frustrated by not being able to find brides. After these suicides were reported, numerous articles and editorials discussed the problem further. The range of responses varied from an analysis of the causes of the "bride famine"⁴⁰ to calls for solutions to the problem. The "bride famine" was often portrayed in terms of women's unwillingness to stay in the rural areas. Young women had begun moving in substantial numbers to the cities in search of jobs throughout the industrialization period and this stream has continued to the present time. As a result, the number of marriage-aged rural women has decreased. Moreover, urban women are less likely to marry rural men and remain in rural areas.

³⁸ Monthly wage levels by educational attainment, *Social Indicators in Korea 2008*, National Statistical Office.

³⁹ Segyeilbo 1990-01-12, Kukminilbo 1990-01-15, KyongHyangsinmun 1990-01-15, Hankukilbo 1990-02-15, KyongHyangsinmun 1990-03-03, Kukminilbo 1990-05-26.

⁴⁰ This term was used by the media to describe the deficit of women in the rural areas (Kyounghyangsinmun, 1984-06-02; Seoulsinmun, 1986-07-11, Kukminilbo, 1990-02-22, Seoulsinmun 1994-10-09).

This tendency has been attributed to comparatively low economic and living standards in rural areas that have resulted from urban-biased economic development over the last three decades.

The solutions for this problem, which were presented in the public media, were summarized as follows. First, the economic and living conditions in the rural areas should be improved through the adoption of mechanized and cash-crop farming for the long term. Second, marriages of rural bachelors with women in the urban areas or in other countries should be arranged for the short term. Cross-border marriages, which had relatively viable short-term effects, became a popular solution. For example, the National Committee for Rural Bachelor's Marriage was organized by the peasant movement, and this organization tried to arrange dates between farmers and female factory workers (Segyeilbo 1990-1-12, Kukminilbo 1990-02-05). Also, beginning in the 1990s, dating between Korean farmers and Korean Chinese women was arranged or supported by various individuals, organizations, and sometimes the government.⁴¹

When rural issues were discussed, the marriage of rural bachelors was often mentioned as central to the various rural crises that arose during the period of

⁴¹ "Two Korean congressmen attempted to arrange marriages between Korean men and Korean Chinese women after they visited Yanbian, China" (Kukminilbo 1990-09-01). In December 1990 and January 1991, news of a marriage between a Korean farmer and a Korean Chinese woman was reported (Kukminilbo 1990-12-22, Seoulsinmun 1990-1-11). The Family Welfare Research Institute planned and organized a trip to China for 20 rural bachelors, and this was supported by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs under the "Marriage Project for Rural Bachelors and Korean Chinese Women" (Hankukilbo 1991-02-04, Dongailbo 1991-02-17). "Samyang Food corporation decided to employ Korean Chinese women and arrange a meeting with Korean rural bachelors" (Hangyere 1991-04-21). "Housewives club organized a bazaar and the profits will be used for supporting rural bachelors to go to China" (Hankukilbo 1991-07-27). "22 couples finally married through these arranged meetings and the candidates for the next trip will be nominated by the Rural Development Administration" (Dongailbo 1991-09-08). Also, "Research Center for Rural Problem helped 11 rural bachelors go to Sakhalin, Russia to meet Korean descendents there" (Dongailbo 1992-02-11). After diplomatic relations between China and Korea were established, the volume of arranged meeting increased. In 1993, the Family Welfare Research Institute organized a trip to China for 53 rural bachelors (Hankukilbo 1993-03-01). It is not yet clear whether the Family Welfare Research Institute continued this program. However, commercial marriage-broker agencies appeared in the newspapers and the industry seemed to grow around this time (Seoulsinmun 1992-8-15).

liberalization. During the local election campaigns, a number of candidates promised to solve the problems of rural bachelors by improving living conditions in the rural areas⁴² (Seoulsinmun 1991-03-16, Dongailbo 1991-03-18, Kyoungnyang 1992-03-21). It was clear that the rural bachelors' marriage problem was critical and that improving rural conditions was an important solution for this problem at that time.

Why did the marriage of rural bachelors become a national concern? According to the 2005 Census, the percentage of never-married single men age 40 to 49 in rural areas (myeon bu) was 11%. This rate is high where near-universal marriage has been the norm and remains highly desirable. It is also fairly high compared with the average percentage of never-married single men age 40 to 49 in Korea, but there are many segments of the population with a similarly high or higher percentage of never-married singles, such as women in the same age group who are highly educated. Why were Koreans more concerned about rural bachelors? Many factors potentially contribute to this alarm, including the patriarchal culture of Korea. Koreans have a strong son preference due to their patriarchal culture, and the sex-ratio imbalance provides evidence of this tendency. Considering the patriarchal culture in Korea, marriages of men may matter more than marriages of women⁴³. In terms of how marriages of rural bachelor became a national concern, however, the structural change in Korea deserves attention.

4.3.2 Rural Development in Korea

Economic development in Korea has gained attention because of Korea's rapid industrialization, and because development was achieved largely at the expense of the

⁴² In 1991, the first local election was held as the municipality was introduced.

⁴³ This contrasts to the case of Singapore where the question of highly educated women's marriage is prevalent.

agricultural sector. The contribution of the agriculture to industrialization was essential in terms of maintaining and supplying cheap labor, providing cheap food for laborers, and land for factories. The role of the agricultural sector is often downplayed in the picture of Korean development, where it is often regarded as a “lagging sector” that needs to “catch up” (Gills, 1999, p. 2). It is important to understand the rural changes that occurred with industrialization, because they established the primary conditions for cross-border marriage, although the context of cross-border marriages has certainly changed rapidly since the 2000s.

Korean rural development after decolonization can be roughly categorized into three periods: the transition period (1945–1961), the developmental regime (1961–1979) and liberalization (1979–present). After liberation (1945) and the Korean War (1950–1953), the Korean economy was struggling with the lack of an industrial basis and recovering from the destruction. This period is described as “lacking policy, preparation, and competence” and as marked by “the ‘desultory’ presence of the US occupation” (Henderson, 1968, p. 57 in Boyer and An, 1991, p. 31). By the end of the 1950s, South Korea faced an economic crisis as U.S. economic assistance was drastically cut and replaced by loans. This situation led to a military coup in 1961. The military regime implemented a strong development project. The general narrative of the Korean development is as follows:

Facing a lack of domestic capital, raw material, and technology, the military government set the direction of economic development toward a labor-intensive manufacturing export strategy. The only way that Korea could be competitive was to decrease prices by decreasing costs. Supplying cheap labor was critical in this process. (Gills, 1999, p. 8)

The international division of labor emerged around this time, and labor-intensive industries were relocated off-shore. This decision shows that the Korean military government shared the rationality of the global economic order (Gills, 1999).

One notable policy that the military government implemented regarding the relationship between the industrial and agricultural sectors was “the low agricultural products–price policy.” This policy kept the price of agricultural products low, especially the price of rice, which was the major food for Koreans and the basis of agricultural production in Korea (Gills, 1999). According to Gills (1999), there are two impacts of low price policy of agricultural products with regard to supplying labor for the industrial sector. On the one hand, it kept the cost of subsistence low so that workers’ wages could be kept low. On the other hand, it lowered incomes in the agricultural sector. This may have led to migration from the rural to urban areas and the creation of surplus industrial labor. Although a low agricultural products–price policy was not the sole cause of the rural–urban migration, it suggests that government policy was geared toward industrialization at the expense of agriculture.

Boyer and An (1991) divided rural development into two periods under this regime: 1961–1971 and 1971–1979. They suggested that the economic gain through industrialization in the first phase was redistributed for rural development in the second phase (pp. 31–42). Indeed, the disparity between the rural and the urban areas was one of the most serious concerns, as shown in the following excerpt from the third Economic Development Plan:

the rapid economic growth in Korea in the 1960’s accelerated the nation’s industrialization but brought about relative lagging of the rural economy at the same time. As a result, we see the necessity of attaining more balanced development among sectors at the moment. (Korean Government, 1971, p. 87)

The rural development project was carried out, and the small and medium towns were developed in order to balance the gap between the rural and the urban. However, this second phase of rural development project is rather a response to the political challenges resulting from the growing discontent of urban people. The labor union movement to improve working and living conditions appeared in the late 1960s and the government faced political challenges from the people, and needed to take action in order to secure its legitimacy. The military government attempted to maintain the support of the rural people through a rural development project.

The 1980s were a period of liberalization, and the Korean economy was integrated into the global economy even further. The basis of the Korean economy shifted from labor-intensive to capital-intensive industries under the government's economic plan in the 1980s. Labor-intensive industries started to move to China and Southeast Asia, and the importing of agricultural products increased during this period. The agricultural sector was regarded as a declining "industry" with little competitiveness. A key issue of agricultural policy was how to improve its "competitiveness and productivity" rather than how to maintain sustainable rural communities. In the late 1970s, the Korean government began importing agricultural products. The rationale for the importing was that Korean agriculture encountered stagnating productivity as a result of the low agricultural products-price policy, but external pressure to open up the agricultural products market intensified (Lee, 1991, p. 20). With this import policy, the idea of Korean rural development declined, and the idea that the "agricultural sector is hopelessly lagging" and that the "people cannot sustain themselves if they only engage in the agricultural sector" became widespread (Lee, 1991, p. 13). In particular, this kind of attitude intensified even more after the Uruguay Round, which began in 1986. The market-oriented restructuring of the agricultural sector began in

1983, and a series of rural development policies for “strengthening competitiveness” were implemented. The general ideas of these policies include 1) the elimination of small-scale farm households; 2) the expansion of the farming scale; and 3) the promotion of agri-business, commercialization, and mechanization (Gills, 1999, p. 64). For example, the Korean government set the goal that the ratio of the nonagricultural income of farm households should increase by up to 70% by 2000. The Agricultural Rent Management Act in 1986 regulated tenancy. Later, this was replaced by new Legislation on Agricultural Land in 1994 (effective in 1996) that made it easy for nonfarmers and agriculture-related industries to hold land. These farmland policies contributed to the withdrawal of small farm households from the agricultural sector. The government offered loans in order to promote the cultivation of cash crops and the mechanization of agriculture; however, this further increased farmers’ indebtedness. During 1987 and 1996, the average farm household debt increased more than nine times (Gills, 1999, p. 78).

4.3.3 Changes in the Rural Population

Data on the farming population and farm household income generally support Gills’ (1999) thesis that the Korean economic development was a process of extracting resources from the rural areas. As industrialization progressed, the proportion of the farming population within the total population decreased, from 56.9% in 1960 to 15.5% in 1990 to 7.1% in 2005; and the contribution of the agricultural sector to the GDP decreased, from 39% in 1960 to 9% in 1990 to 3% in 2005 (Agriculture Census, National Statistical Office; World Development Indicator Database). Initially, the “rural” population was nearly coterminous with the population engaged in agriculture and farming occupations, and with those living in the administrative category of “county,” which is composed of towns (*eup*) and townships (*myeon*). As

modernization progressed, however, these categories became much more complicated. For example, a “county” could and did become industrialized and more urbanized as a result of new local or national development plans. The National Statistical Office began to use administrative categories instead of the categories of rural and urban in 1995. The government explains the current administrative categories as follows: “one of the ways to identify urban areas is the differentiation method in terms of the administrative system, and in the case of Korea, the smallest administrative units, that is, towns (*eup*), townships (*myeon*), neighborhoods (*dong*), exude a hierarchical tendency depending on the degree of urbanity. Neighborhoods (*dong*) tend to be very much urban, although townships (*myeon*) are more rural, with towns (*eup*) between the two as transitional zones” (<http://atlas.ngii.go.kr>).⁴⁴

The migration from the rural to urban areas happened actively during the developmental regime. For example, the population of Seoul, the capital, tripled between 1960 and 1975, and the government launched a new population redistribution policy in 1977 (Kim, 1981, p. 205). However, this policy also was an attempt to solve the problem by developing multiple cities in various local areas rather than developing the rural areas. The increase in the urban population continued in part because of ongoing rural to urban migration among working-age men and women. In particular, the proportion of rural to urban female migrants between the ages of 15 and 24

⁴⁴ The definition of “farming population” has also changed over time. According to the 2005 agriculture census, anyone who stayed in the farm household on the census day was counted as part of the “farming population.” According to the 1980 agriculture census data, anyone who stayed at the farm household more than three months or who was going to stay more than three months from the census day was counted as part of the “farming population”; maids, nannies, workers, and boarders are included. “Farm households” are divided into “full-time farm households” (households in which all members engage in farming) and “part-time farm households” (households with a member who did nonagricultural work for more than a month [Agriculture census 2005, National Statistical Office]).

increased from 40.9% during the period 1966–1970 to 50.3% during the period 1970–1975 (see Table 4.5).

Rural-urban migration led to changes in the population structure within farming communities. According to 1975 data from the Economic Planning Board, people under age 30 made up 39.2% of the agricultural-sector labor force, and people over 50 years old made up 26.6%. By 1989, however, the figures were 8.5% and 53.1%, respectively (Lee, 1991, p. 26). The aging tendency accelerated during the 1990s.

The decrease of the farming population continued between 1990 and 2005 (Figures 4.3 and 4.4). The declining rural living standard due to the failure of the neoliberal agricultural policies in the 1990s may have contributed to the continuous drift of the farming population during the period 1990–2005. Gills (1999) argues that the sufficiency of living expenses in farm households also dramatically decreased, from 92.1% in 1979 to 77.2% in 1987 to 63.6% in 1996 (Table 4.6). The rural areas have thus been associated with economic hardship, hard work, and backwardness since the industrialization.

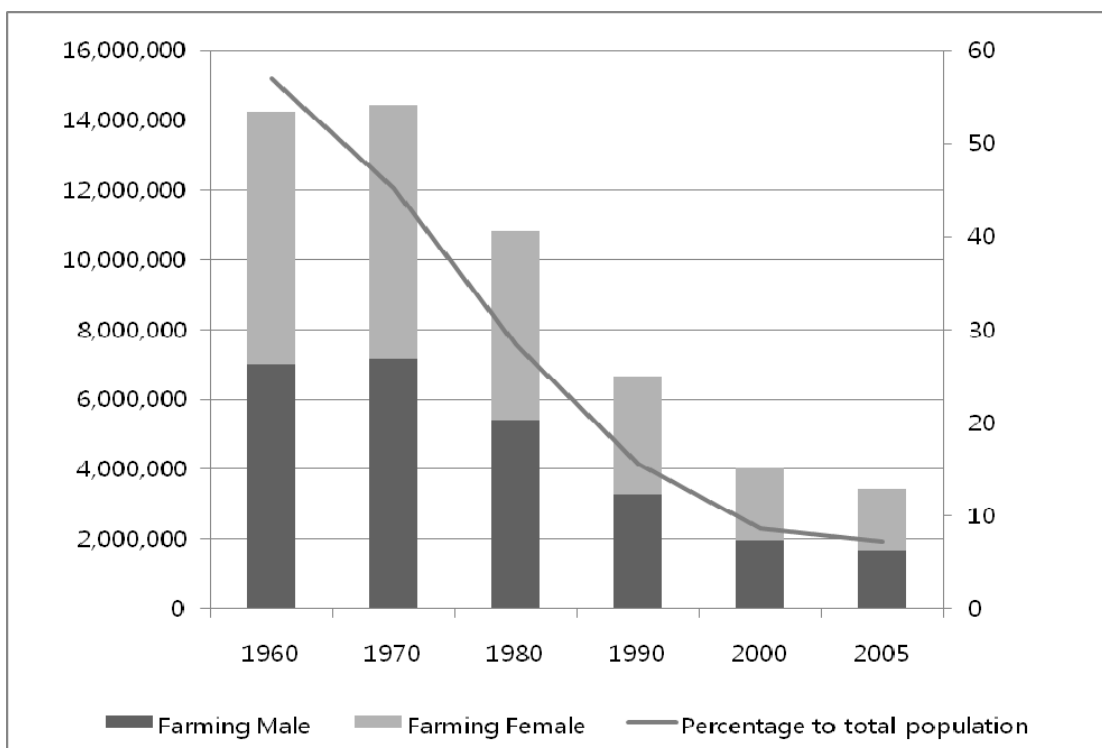


Figure 4.3 Total farming population by gender and the proportion in the total population from 1960–2005, Agricultural Census
(Source: National Statistical Office)

Table 4.5 Age-Sex Composition of Net Rural to Urban Migration, 1960–1975
(Kim and Sloboda, 1981, p. 61)

Age at End of Period*	1960–1966			1966–1970			1970–1975		
	Males (%)	Females (%)	Sex ratio	Males (%)	Females (%)	Sex ratio	Males (%)	Females (%)	Sex ratio
5–14	32.1	30.8	100.3	27.0	26.9	109.2	29.1	22.0	108.3
15–24	35.3	42.5	80.0	33.7	40.9	89.7	41.0	50.3	66.5
25–34	27.4	17.6	149.7	27.5	17.9	166.9	18.8	10.0	153.8
35–44	4.5	2.4	184.6	8.1	6.8	130.5	6.4	6.9	74.9
45–59	0.0	2.9	0.2	2.9	4.7	66.7	3.2	6.0	43.4
60+	0.6	3.9	16.2	0.8	2.7	31.4	1.8	4.8	30.5
Total	100.0	100.0	96.3	100.0	100.	108.9	100.0	100.0	81.8
Number (1000s)	459.3	477.0	-	1206.3	1107.3	-	759.2	928.4	

(Source: Calculated from KDI adjusted CSR net migration estimates)

*because of the irregular interval between censuses, the ages covered by the first age group are 6–15 for migration during the period 1960–1966 and 4–14 for migration during the period 1966–1970. For other age groups the exact ages covered by the 1960–1966 estimates are one year in advance of those given, i.e., 16–25, 26–35, . . . , 61+

Table 4.6 Sufficiency of Living Expenses (percent), 1962–1996 (modified from Gills, 1999, p. 70)

Year	1962	1966	1971	1975	1979	1983	1987	1991	1996
Sufficiency	96.9	92.3	93.4	116.0	92.1	82.2	77.2	74.7	63.3

Sufficiency = Agricultural income / Living Expenses * 100

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Report on the Farm Household Economy Survey (annual data)

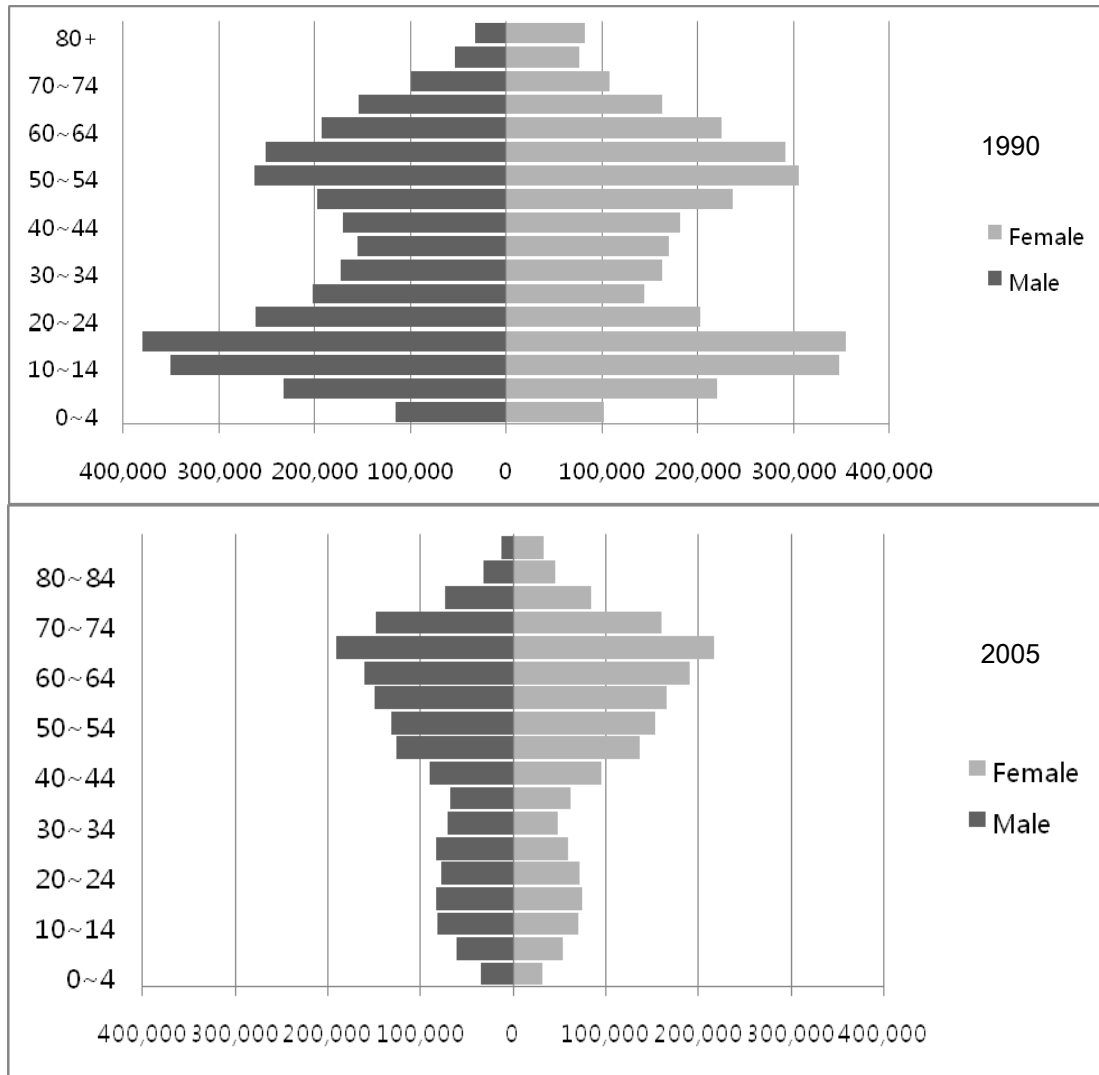


Figure 4.4 Changes in structure of farming population from 1990 to 2005
(Source: Agriculture Census 1990, 2005, National Statistical Office)

4.3.4 The “triple exploitation of rural women in Korea”

Many of the young women who moved from rural to urban areas during the 1960s and 1970 were absorbed into the labor-intensive manufacturing sectors (Koo, 2001). What happened to the women who remained in the agricultural sector? Gills (1999) has argued that rural women in Korea were exploited by the invisibility of women’s labor at home and in the field, and that this exploitation intensified with the restructuring of the agricultural sector. According to Gills (1999), this “triple exploitation of rural women” is also related to the fact that “in subsistence agricultural production, female labor, though incorporated into the public sphere of production, is not remunerated, since this labor is regarded as merely an extension of household reproduction” (p. 121). Unlike wage labor in other industries, there is no minimum measure of labor in the agricultural sector. In the case of women, it is hard to demarcate their labor between “public” agricultural work and “private” household work. In particular, their participation in “public” agricultural work has been required even more under the pressure of commercialization.

Beginning in 1999, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry started to conduct research on women farmers and established a plan for fostering women farmers in order to accommodate the changing environment, a plan that mainly addresses the declining farming population and the emerging importance of women as farm laborers. This plan for fostering women farmers did not gain much attention, but it indicated that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry recognized the declining farming population as a problem and attempted to solve this problem by acknowledging women’s contribution to the agricultural sector and fostering women farmers even before the discourse of low fertility and aging society gained currency in

the mid-2000s. According to the Survey of Women Farmers in 2003,⁴⁵ 78% of women farmers reported working more than 10 hours a day (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery, 2003). Again, however, their contribution was hardly recognized or compensated. The declining farming population and intensifying the hardship of maintaining livelihood with farming, which have accumulated throughout the industrialization and globalization process, made rural areas less desired, in particular by Korean women. The “bride famine” problem, which represented the rural crisis in the 1990s, has persisted, and is now directly linked to the sustainability of rural communities. According to the Agriculture Prospectus 2005 by the Korea Rural Economic Institute, the Korean rural population of 1.2 million is expected to decrease during the next 10 years, and a serious agricultural labor-deficit problem is expected (Dongailbo 2005-04-06).

4.3.5 Marriage Squeeze in Korea as a Signal of the Rural Crisis?

Agricultural census data in 2005 show a marriage squeeze in the farming population. As is shown in Table 4.7, the never-married farming population of prime marriage age, between 25 and 34 years old, is 122,717 for males and 55,972 for females, and the sex ratio is 219 and 371 for those between 30 and 34 years old alone (Agriculture Census 2005, National Statistical Office). Severe sex-ratio imbalances are observed throughout the age groups as well. The marriage squeeze in the farming population is rooted in structural changes that have occurred within the industrial structure, including industrialization, the rural to urban migration, and the shrinking agricultural sector. The marriage squeeze phenomenon became a social issue in the form of the “rural bachelor’s marriage problem” or the “bride famine” because it is linked to the

⁴⁵ It was conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry through Gallup Korea in 2003. The sample size was 1,302.

population of rural areas, labor in the agricultural sector directly, and the sustainability of agriculture as a consequence. In other words, the marriage squeeze represents a crisis of social reproduction in the rural area in this context⁴⁶.

Cross-border marriages which were prescribed for the solution for this problem raise a new set of questions; how do cross border marriages, in particular marriage migrants play a role in dealing with the current crisis of social reproduction in Korea? What are the demographic and economic conditions in Vietnam? Is there any pronounced marriage squeeze on women in Vietnam? How the marriage market between these countries was formed? In the next section, I will explore the demographic and economic conditions and marriage squeeze in Vietnam.

⁴⁶ While there has been much media coverage of the “bride famine” for rural men and much active governmental intervention during the last two decades, very little public attention has been paid to the marriage of highly educated single women in their 30s. I did a keyword search of the Korean media database, which includes 9 major newspapers for the period 1985–2007. Using the keyword phrase “single women in their 30s,” I found 104 articles. Newspaper articles about single women in their 30s are mostly reports of new marriage trends, or emerging markets such as tourism, literature, and other cultural products for single women in their 30s. These women are often referred as “gold misses”: highly educated, high-income single women in their 30s. Nonetheless these unmarried women have not grabbed the attention of government policy makers to nearly the extent that the rural bachelors have.

While cross-border marriage has already expanded to low-income urban men, the discourse on cross-border marriage is still largely associated with the marriage of rural bachelors, and it is still associated with the marriage squeeze on men in rural areas. The marriage squeeze in rural areas is in turn rooted in the economic and demographic structural changes that occurred during the period of industrialization, and can be considered a signal of the crisis of reproduction of the agricultural sector and in rural life in general. The current expansion of cross-border marriage to low-income urban men and the marriage squeeze on men with low education is symptomatic of a broader problem of social reproduction and intensified social stratification in Korea.

Table 4.7 Never-Married Farming Population, by Gender, 2005

Age group	Male	Female	Sex ratio	Sex ratio*
20–24	76,014	66,506	114	
25–29	75,605	43,288	175	114
30–34	47,112	12,684	371	109
35–39	24,035	3,987	603	189
40–44	12,529	1,649	760	314
45–49	6,082	848	717	369
50–54	1,977	456	434	233

* sex ratio between men in one cohort and women in the next younger cohort.⁴⁷
 (Source: Agriculture Census 2005; National Statistical Office)

4.4 Demographic Conditions of Cross-Border Marriage in Vietnam

4.4.1 Political History and Demographic Changes

Vietnam has experienced a turbulent political history: 70 years of French colonial rule (1884–1954) and 30 years of war (1946–1975) (Barbieri *et al.*, 1996, p. 212). The first Indochina war (the Vietminh War) for independence lasted from 1946 to 1954, and in 1954 the Geneva Conference provisionally divided Vietnam into North and South Vietnam. The second Indochina war (the Vietnam War) for reunification lasted from 1965 to 1975; the country was finally reunited in 1976 under a socialist regime. This political turbulence presumably resulted in demographic changes, but it also explains the limited availability of data at the same time. Barbieri *et al.* (1996) noted that

prior to the first national population Census in 1979, the data—which were unpublished—were limited and defective. They consisted of population counts during the French colonial period, then partial censuses conducted in 1960 and 1974 in the north and 1976 in the south. In addition, there were a few local level surveys such as those taken in 1962 and 1967 by the National Statistics Institute in Saigon. (p. 211)

⁴⁷ Park and Cho (1995) suggested this method to take into account the difference in marriage ages between men and women in Korea.

Much of the research on population in Vietnam depends on the national census counts of 1979 and 1989 and the Vietnam Demographic and Health Survey in 1988⁴⁸ as a major source of data (Barbieri *et al.*, 1996; Goodkind, 1995a, 1997; Banister, 1993). Hence, the discussion on demographic changes prior to the 1979 census may be a general estimation, and I will focus on the discussion after the reunification in 1976 and the economic liberalization (Doi Moi) in the 1980s, using data from the 1989 census, 1999 census, and statistical yearbooks.⁴⁹

The literature describes various distinctive characteristics of the Vietnamese population. Among these, two general characteristics persist from the 1979 census to the 1999 census: 1) a young population, and 2) a low sex ratio. The total population in Vietnam in 1979 was 52.7 million, and the population increased steadily to 76.3 million in 1999 and to 84.3 million in 2005.⁵⁰ The fertility rate decreased from 6.1 during the period from 1969 to 1974⁵¹ to 2.2 in 2005.⁵² As of 1989, the population pyramid of Vietnam was bell-shaped, with nearly 40% of the population under 15 years of age (Barbieri *et al.*, 1996, p. 216). It has subsequently begun to shift toward more of a barrel shape; 33% of the population was under 15 years old in 1999 (Population and Housing Census Vietnam 1999, General Statistical Office). The sex ratio in 1979 was 94.2. There are two explanations for this low sex ratio: 1) the excess male mortality during the war of reunification (1965–1975), and 2) the massive

⁴⁸ Barbieri *et al.* (1996) also used complementary data from research conducted by the General Statistical Office, the National Committee for Population and Family Planning, and by international organizations (UNHCR, UNFPA, UNDP, WHO) and NGOs (p. 212).

⁴⁹ I omitted the 1979 census because I couldn't access the data. However, some of the citations in this section include references to the 1979 census data.

⁵⁰ Barbieri *et al.*, 1996, p. 216; Population and Housing Census Vietnam 1999; http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/vietnam_statistics.html.

⁵¹ This figure is estimated from the 1979 census, the 1989 census, and the 1988 Demographic and Health Survey and National Committee for Population and Family Planning (Barbieri *et al.*, 1996, p. 216).

⁵² http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/vietnam_statistics.html.

emigration of males during and after the war of reunification (Goodkind, 1997, p. 111; Barbieri *et al.*, 1996, p. 215). Male teenagers tried to avoid being drafted (Kibria, 1993 in Goodkind, 1997). Nearly 400,000 Vietnamese left the country in 1979, and the accumulated total number of emigrants exceeded 1.8 million as of 1993, according to the UNHCR (Barbieri *et al.*, 1996, p. 228). Subsequently, the sex-ratio imbalance has been narrowed to 94.7 in 1989 and to 96.4 in 1999 (Barbieri *et al.*, 1996, p. 215, Population and Housing Census Vietnam 1999; General Statistical Office).

4.4.2 The Vietnamese Double Marriage Squeeze

Goodkind (1997) has analyzed the sex-ratio imbalance and its implications for marriage among the Vietnamese. He emphasized that Vietnamese women faced a lack of men as a result of the country's unique historical experience, discussed above. According to the Vietnam 1989 Population Census, women in Vietnam between the ages of 20 and 34 out-numbered their male counterparts by about 10% (Goodkind, 1997, p. 111). In a numerical sense, women in Vietnam were caught in a marriage squeeze. Goodkind (1997) juxtaposed the marriage squeeze in Vietnam with the marriage squeeze within Vietnamese communities in the United States and Australia. He noted that Vietnamese men residing in the United States and Australia outnumbered their female counterparts by 20 to 30% (Goodkind, 1997, p. 111). Goodkind (1997) described these two trends as a "Vietnamese double marriage squeeze." One of the assumptions on which his research relies is that a marriage market is likely to be formed based on nationality or ethnicity⁵³ and may expand outside its national borders. Goodkind (1997) suggested the possibility of exchange between geographically separated marriage markets by showing that "the overseas Vietnamese press regularly carries advertisements for husbands seeking brides from

⁵³ I refer to Vietnamese here.

Vietnam” (p. 121). Preferences for marriage between people of the same national or ethnic group have also been documented by Lievens (1999) who found a preference among Turkish and Moroccan migrants in Belgium to marry someone from their country of origin. As cross-border marriage among different nationals and ethnic groups increases, the assumption needs to be reassessed, however.

Whether the marriage-squeeze in Vietnam that Goodkind (1997) analyzed has contributed to current cross-border marriages between Vietnamese women and foreign men, including Taiwanese and Koreans, is an interesting question. As we discussed earlier, Vietnam experienced a severe marriage squeeze as a result of political turmoil and war. According to the Vietnam 1999 Population Census, the sex ratio at that time was 96.4: there were still more women than men in Vietnam. Because of the lack of a partner, Vietnamese women may have found an alternative through cross-border marriage. However, the sex-ratio imbalance itself does not explain why Taiwanese or Korean men became a part of this alternative. Furthermore, the sex ratio for those between the ages of 15 and 24, who were roughly at the marriage age in the 2000s, was 99.9, while the sex ratio for those under 29 years of age was 102.8; signifying that the marriage squeeze has ended (Table 4.8). Although the marriage squeeze may have contributed to the growth in cross-border marriage initially, and since the imbalance has corrected itself over time but the stream of cross-border marriages persists, we need to explore other factors such as educational attainment and labor participation in relation to marriage.

Table 4.8 Sex Ratio by Age in Vietnam, 1999

Age Group	Male	Female	Sex ratio
0	647,832	615,767	105.2
1–4	3,034,911	2,873,732	105.6
5–9	4,634,400	4,398,762	105.4
10–14	4,654,315	4,412,247	105.5
15–19	4,141,058	4,081,222	101.5
20–24	3,430,084	3,496,303	98.1
25–29	3,281,300	3,286,874	99.8
Total (0–29)	23,823,900	23,164,907	102.8

(Source: Vietnam 1999 Population and Housing Census; General Statistical Office)

4.4.3 Economic Development in Vietnam

Vietnamese society has experienced huge socioeconomic and cultural changes since the transition of its economy (Doi Moi) in 1986. The Vietnamese economy is one of the fastest-growing economies at the moment. GNI per capita has increased from 130USD in 1990 to 760USD in 2007 (World Development Indicator). The average annual GDP growth rate between 2003 and 2007 was nearly 8.05% (calculated from Statistical Yearbook of Vietnam 2008; General Statistical Office, p. 674). Vietnamese economic development has often been compared to that of East Asian tiger economies (Van and Mallon, 2003). Although there are similarities in terms of their overall strategies and governance, for example, their focus on export-oriented industrialization under an authoritarian regime, there are tangible and intangible differences. The transformation from an agriculture-based economy to an industrial and service-based economy also occurred in Vietnam, although the pace and the modality have differed somewhat from its East Asian counterparts. First, the degree of change is different, although they share similar patterns. The share of agriculture in Vietnamese GDP decreased from 39% in 1990 to 22% in 2004; while, the share of industry in GDP increased from 23% in 1990 to 40% in 2004 (World Development Indicator). In

addition, data on the percent of labor employed in various sectors of the economy present a somewhat different picture. Agricultural employment decreased from 75% in 1990 to 58% in 2004, and industrial employment increased from 12% in 1990 to 17% in 2004 in Vietnam.⁵⁴ These patterns are similar to those described for Korea, although the pace and extent of the transformation in Vietnam was less pronounced⁵⁵.

In addition, female labor force participation rate in Vietnam has been higher and more consistent overtime as a result of the country's socialist legacy; it was estimated to be 79% in 1980 and 77% in 2006 (World Development Indicator). This contrasts with the female labor force participation rate in Korea, which was 39.3% in 1970, 42.5% in 1980, 47% in 1990, 48.6% in 2000, and 50% in 2005 (National Statistical Office). In Vietnam in 2004, 60% of female employees worked in agriculture, 14% in industry, and 26% in service occupations (World Development Indicator). In Korea in 1980, 39% of female employees worked in agriculture, 24% in industry, and 37% in service occupations (World Development Indicator).

Third, the pace of urbanization and rural to urban migration has been relatively slow in Vietnam. The proportion of the Vietnamese population that was urban was 19.2% in 1979, 19.4% in 1989, 23.7% in 1999, and 29.6% in 2009 (World Development Indicator). It is an interesting contrast to Korea, where 28% of the population was

⁵⁴ In 2000, 65.1% of the employed population were engaged in agriculture, forestry, and fishing, and 13.1% were engaged in industry and construction; in 2005 the figures were 57.3% and 18.2%, respectively (Statistical Yearbook of Vietnam 2006; General Statistical Office).

⁵⁵ For example, in Korea the share of agriculture GDP decreased from 39% in 1965 to 16% in 1980, and the share of industry in GDP increased from 21% in 1965 to 37% in 1980⁵⁵ (World Development Indicator). Agricultural employment decreased from in Korea 58.1% in 1965 to 34% in 1980, and industrial employment increased from 10.3% in 1965 to 29% in 1980⁵⁵ (World Development Indicator).

considered urban in 1960, 41% in 1970, 57% in 1980, and 74% in 1990. Although Vietnam's urban population increased during this period, the data show that more than 70% of the population still resides in rural areas.

Rural to urban migration is a quintessential part of the changes in gender relations that occurred during the industrialization period in the late twentieth century. It usually accompanies with growth in job opportunities for women in labor-intensive manufacturing industries and changing expectations about the roles' of young women as income earners. The economic transition in Vietnam was also associated with migration from rural to urban areas (Ungar, 2000; Dang *et al.*, 2003). Per capita income in urban areas was nearly twice that in rural areas; for example, in 1999 urban income was 516.7 (thousand dong) and rural income was 225.0 (43.6%); in 2002, the figures were 622.1 and 275.1 (44.2%); in 2004, they were 815.4 and 378.1 (46.3%); in 2006, they were 1,058 and 506 (47.8%) (Statistical Yearbook of Vietnam 2008; General Statistical Office, p. 601). This income gap persists, although it has improved over time.

The comparably slow pace of Vietnamese urbanization can be explained in part, by the long-standing de-urbanization policy of the socialist Vietnamese government, but also by discrepancies in the data⁵⁶. Banister (1993) explains that the communist leadership was ideologically opposed to urban population growth and concentration (p. 35). The government implemented a de-urbanization policy, including a household registration system and a population relocation policy.⁵⁷ According to Dang (2005), migration, rural to urban migration in particular, was effectively regulated until 1990

⁵⁶ Also, there are issues of the vague definition of "urban" and of underreporting.

⁵⁷ From 1976 to 1980 the government sent 1.47 million people, mostly from the cities, to the new economic zone, and from 1981 to 1991, 2.3 million (Banister, 1993, p. 35).

because residents were only allowed to access basic necessities based on their residential permits.⁵⁸ He further explains that migrants without permanent registration have no or limited access to formal sector jobs, education, health care, housing, land-use certificates, notary public services, loan credits, business, or registration for their purchases of houses or vehicles (Dang, 2005). The data show that this stream of migration has increased, but remains comparatively small compared with the drastic economic structural changes that have occurred in recent decades⁵⁹. It is also likely that some rural to urban migration was not counted by the authorities, as some people failed to report their moves to the cities. Indeed, obtaining registration for the city is extremely difficult so many tend to live in urban areas without ever registering. In addition to other estimation problems, it is hard to estimate what percent of rural to urban migration streams is female.

4.5 Summary

I discussed the population changes that accompanied the political-economic changes in Korea and Vietnam. In the case of Vietnam, political turmoil heavily influenced the population dynamics. The marriage squeeze on women was discussed as a potential condition for cross-border marriage. However, the sex ratio has become more balanced recently. I have drawn attention to the relatively slow urbanization, small-

⁵⁸ There are four classifications (United Nations Country Team, 2004, p. 24): KT1 permanent registration—nonmigrant with household registration; KT2 permanent registration—intradistrict mover with household registration; KT3 temporary registration—migrant, residing independently or with relatives, without household registration book, 6–12 months registration with extension; and KT4—floating migrant, residing in guest house or temporary dwelling, without household registration book, 1–3 months or no registration.

⁵⁹ According to the Vietnam 1999 population and housing census, only 1.9% of the rural population (541,978 men and 575,582 women) moved from rural to urban areas between 1994 and 1999, and those in the age group 20–29 were the biggest migrant group (Vietnam 1999 Population and Housing Census; General Statistical Office). As of 2009, 73.1% of the labor force was classified as rural (World Development Indicator).

scale rural to urban migration, and low employment in the industrial sector in Vietnam when compared with Korea. Current increases in marriage migration may be due in part to the current rapid economic development in Vietnam and to internal population changes. These may be more relevant than the sex-ratio imbalance to marriage migration than to the sex-ratio imbalance. This thesis requires further research.

In the case of Korea, I have paid attention to how the marriage of rural bachelors became a national concern in the context of the rural crisis in the 1980s and the 1990s. The rural bachelors' crisis can be described as an example of a marriage squeeze in demographic terms. I attempted to situate the concept of "marriage squeeze," which describes numerical imbalance between men and women, in the context of structural changes. The current discussion regarding the marriage squeeze already takes into consideration the socioeconomic characteristics of this population. I attempted to think of marriage squeeze as a signal of the crisis of social reproduction in the case of rural bachelors' marriage and cross-border marriage in Korea in the late 1980s and 1990s. The marriage squeeze most affects men with low education, but an increase in cross-border marriage among urban men seems to be linked to the overall marriage squeeze. What kind of social change does the current marriage squeeze reflect? I will discuss this further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE:

COMMERCIAL MARRIAGE BROKERAGE INDUSTRY AND THE PROCESS OF MARRIAGE BROKERAGE

The commercial marriage brokerage industry is an important element to explaining marriage migration in Asia. The commercial matchmaking industry is directly linked to the increase in cross-border marriage and is a distinctive characteristic of the current mass cross-border marriage phenomenon in East Asia (Wang and Chang 2003; Lee 2005). Many scholars have identified the recruitment industry as a future research topic in migration studies, but there are only a handful of studies on international marriage brokerage agencies in Asia. Wang and Chang (2003) described the international matchmaking system between Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries. Ko *et al.* (2005) studied the brokerage practice between Korea and Vietnam, and Korea and the Philippines with a focus on human rights violations in the practice of marriage brokerage.

In addition, several studies also explore matchmaking processes. Constable (2003) offered an ethnographic study of commercially arranged marriage between American men and women from China and the Philippines. Thai (2008) studied international marriage among Vietnamese American men and Vietnamese women. The first two works engage in the discussion of commodification to a certain extent by observing the emergence of the de facto marriage industry and marriage market (Wang and Chang 2003; Ko *et al.* 2005). They describe the marriage process from the perspectives of couples who engaged in commercial marriage brokerage without imposing a moral framework or drawing attention to the complex cultural meanings of exchange of a variety of capital (Constable 2003; Thai 2008). In this chapter, I attempt

to document the transnational marriage brokerage process on the one hand, to illustrate how the commercial brokerage industry is located in an institutional context across countries, and how its operation moves back and forth across the boundary between public and private, and formal and informal, on the other.

The primary issue of researching commercial recruitment agencies is the legal ambiguity of the commercial marriage brokerage industry and, consequently, data problems. In many cases, commercial marriage brokerage agencies are not legally recognized and as such interviewing brokers or engaging in participatory observation is difficult. Even if this industry is legally recognized, the data tend not to be very accurate. In the case of Korea, the national statistical data on commercial marriage brokerage agencies was collected under the category of private service⁶⁰. After 2008 when new regulations for the marriage brokerage industry were implemented, it was possible to access to more accurate data. This chapter is written based on field research from October 2007 to July 2008 in Korea and Vietnam, in particular, participatory observations including of the marriage brokerage process, a workshop for brokers held by the Korean Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City, IOM interviews with officers and single women at the Marriage Support Center in Ho Chi Minh City, and interviews with two brokers in Korea, two Korean brokers in Vietnam, and one Vietnamese local broker in Vietnam. I also analyze in-depth interviews with 14 Vietnamese women who married Korean men, 8 Korean men who married Vietnamese women, and their families. Government documents and Web pages of commercial marriage brokerage agencies were used as reference for the scale and structure of the industry and the legal frameworks of the industry.

⁶⁰ Korean Standard Statistical Classification
(<http://kostat.go.kr/kssc/main/MainAction.do?method=main&catgrp=ekssc>)

5.1 Decision to Marry Foreigners

5.1.1 Men's Decision to Marry Foreign Women

Korean men who marry foreigners are often represented as older, less educated farmers. Data from the National Survey on Multicultural Families in 2009 shows that this media representation is not entirely incorrect in terms of their education and income levels.⁶¹ As mentioned in a previous chapter, cross-border marriage is not limited to rural areas, however. While early media attention focused on rural bachelors, the marriage migrants themselves have recently had the overwhelming media attention. There has been less recent discussion about the husbands of marriage migrants, who they are and how they decided to marry foreign women.

I heard a variety of stories during informal conversations with the husbands of my Vietnamese interviewees and ended up interviewing a number of the Korean husbands who had married Vietnamese women. Each of them had a different life story, and it was indeed hard to summarize them as a grand narrative. There are various reasons that prospective bridegrooms considered cross-border marriage. Based on the interviews, I am going to reconstruct a Korean man's narrative to give a sense of who these men are, why they considered cross-border marriage, and what kind of process they went through. I presented three common themes that emerged from the interviews with quotes. Then I selected one interview based on the scope and the richness of the information.

“Korean women are snobbish.”

Interviewees often explain that they chose to marry a foreigner because Korean women are snobbish. Most of them tried to meet Korean women through their network

⁶¹ See chapter 6 for details.

of family and friends. However, they often found that Korean women are “too materialistic and snobbish.” Women whom they met often asked directly how much they earned, whether they had any assets, and whether they were planning to live with their parents. They felt insulted and upset. They looked for other possibilities.

“I was a fine man when I was young.”

I heard the following story repeatedly from the Korean husband interviewees: “I was a fine man when I was young. I am not sure what happened. All of sudden I found myself undesirable.” Initially, I took it as nothing more than a statement to compensate for their “undesirable” situation. However, some of the individual life histories converged with the history of national economic development. For example, a 44-year-old man, who used to work for the one of the biggest steel companies in Korea until he was laid off after the Asian financial crisis in 1997, must indeed have been considered a fine young man with a good job in the late 1980s. He wanted to establish himself a little more before he married, so he postponed marriage. However, he was laid off in his mid 30s, and it took a while for him to find a job in a smaller steel company. The fact that he is in his 40s may make him less desirable in the marriage market. However, it seems that the opportunity for him as a factory worker with a modest education to build an economic foundation for a family has declined structurally.

Stigma of commercially arranged marriage

Seven out of 8 interviewees married through commercial arrangements. Some of them brought this up at the beginning of the interview. They often said, “I am not qualified to talk about the marriage” or “I feel ashamed to talk about this.” It was clear that many were aware of the negative media representation of commercially arranged

cross-border marriages. It seems that there are double stigmas associated with the men who engaged in cross-border marriage: the fact that they looked for foreign brides indicates their weak socioeconomic status, and the stigma associated with the commercial arrangement itself, which is often associated with abusive practices.

*Minho's Story*⁶²

Minho is 40-year-old truck driver. Ever since he was 28 years old, he has either been self-employed or driven a truck. He did not have any time or space for meeting women because he was so busy. He met a woman through other people when he was about 35 or 36 years old but the woman was snobbish. She asked how much he earned, whether she had to live with his parents, and how much money he was going to send to her parents. This made him withdraw the idea of marrying a Korean woman.

Even though he did not personally know anyone who had married a foreign woman, he knew about it through the media and decided to marry a foreigner. He was afraid of Chinese women because of the publicity about fake marriages. Filipinas were not very familiar to him and he was also concerned about his kids in the future.

Vietnamese people seemed very diligent and they look like Koreans. So he made up his mind to see Vietnamese woman.

He found an advertisement in the local newspaper and called one of the agencies. The person from the agency visited him and showed him photos of married couples. That same week, he went to Vietnam. He talked to his family before he headed for Vietnam. His parents did not say anything because they generally supported his decisions most

⁶² Interviewee's name is not his real name. I chose this narrative because this offered more detailed information of his decision making process and his experience in marriage brokerage agencies than others.

of the time. One of his brothers-in-law warned him that he might feel that he wasted money later. He was aware that there are many uncertainties about this marriage. The bride might not perform as a wife as satisfyingly as he expected or she might run away. It was not an easy decision because he had to take into consideration these uncertainties and his future kids.

When he went to the airport there were another 9 men from all over the country. He explained that since a broker (siljang) is able to find at most 2 to 3 bridegrooms per month, various offices set one departure date and send people on that day. He used the agency called “Happy Wedding,” which has offices nationwide. But he mentioned that it may be difficult to find them because they change their name constantly and the managers quit their jobs frequently and start their own marriage brokerage businesses.

He chose his wife because she was a first daughter. First daughters are responsible and vital. Also she had grown up without parents. He thought she must be strong. Since he was the youngest, he thought it was a good match. After 45 days, he went to Vietnam again and stayed for 5 days. A Vietnamese local authority reviewed whether he had property and was healthy.

After his wife came to Korea, he had a chance to communicate with her in more detail with the help of an acquaintance at church who could speak Vietnamese. He realized that she did not receive any of the money that he had given her through the agency. He was very upset about it and called the other nine men who had been married at the same time. He seriously considered suing the agency, but the cost was too high given the benefits. Now he has two babies. His only worry is supporting his children. He is

already 40 years old, and in order to support his children until university, he has to work another 20 years.

He continued to talk about how he felt about cross-border marriage in general. He mentioned that it was not easy to talk to other people about this process because he married through an agency, which involves money issues, unlike a “normal love affair.” But at the same time, he emphasized that it was not an easy choice. He had to consider many things such as whether his kids would be discriminated against or not, and whether he and his wife would face any problems in the family. He felt really sorry whenever he saw an international marriage that failed or when a woman ran away. He mentioned that men who choose this kind of marriage are less educated and earn little. Hence, their lives are hard and it is hard for them to spend enough time with their wives and take care of them. Women often stay alone or with their parents-in-law, and it must be really hard for these women to stand. He thinks that that is why this kind of marriage does not work out very often.

5.1.2 Women’s Decision to Marry Foreign Men

While marriage-migrant women gained huge media attention, they tended to be portrayed as victims of domestic violence, as filial women who want to support their poor family in their home country, or as vicious women who want to take advantage of a Korean husband. Ironically, the media coverage represented marriage migrants in a certain way, and it created a particular set of images of “Vietnamese women.” Little attention has been paid to the socioeconomic status of these women in Vietnam or to their decision-making process. Below, I present three common themes in relation to Vietnamese women’s decisions and their experiences with commercial marriage

brokerage agencies. I also select one interview to highlight, which shows the interviewee's experience of commercial marriage brokerage.

Trying their luck

Most Vietnamese migrant interviewees indicated that their friends or neighbors told them about the possibility of participating in meetings with foreign men. Their degree of commitment to marrying foreign men varied. Most of them said that they just casually went to the meeting out of curiosity, as an “experiment,” or “trying their luck.” Although they spoke about it casually, it did not seem to have been a spontaneous or casual decision. Travelling from the rural area to Ho Chi Minh City seems like a big deal to those who have not left home before. Also, some areas such as Can Tho are more than a 10 hour-bus ride from Ho Chi Minh City.

Marriage for free

Since most of them were from rural areas, they stayed at the dormitory in Ho Chi Minh City. They went to the meetings repeatedly until they were selected. It took a couple of weeks for some, but it usually took longer than a month. If it took too long for a woman to be selected, she was expected to pay for her room and board for the period of her residence and to leave the dormitory, so the idea that women can participate in the brokerage process for free is not always true. It is free only if the woman marries a foreigner. The cost of room and board is eventually paid by her husband. Once a woman was selected, she tended to stay at the dormitory, even after the wedding, until she left for Korea.

Brides Contests and Private Networks

Most of my Vietnamese interviewees in Korea who had been married between 2003 and 2005 had gone through a “brides contest” type of arrangement.⁶³ However, my interviews with single women in Vietnam in 2008 offered a new story. I interviewed 15 single women in the origin neighborhoods of the marriage-migrants I interviewed in Korea. Three of them turned out to be already seeing Korean men through web cameras or were married and waiting for their paperwork to be completed. They indicated that their neighbors or friends who had married Korean men introduced them to Korean men through web cameras. The way to meet foreign men seems to have become more diversified as the personal networks of Vietnamese marriage migrants have become established in Korea. Some of my marriage-migrant interviewees said that they had already introduced their relatives or neighbors in Vietnam to Korean men and they had received rewards from both parties. Often marriage-migrant interviewees showed me photos of their sisters or relatives and asked me whether I knew any single Korean man. The importance of migrant networks was reaffirmed innumerable times. As the migrants’ networks grew through kinship, friends, and community members, the likelihood of emigration increased by lowering the cost, mitigating the risk, and raising the benefits (Massey *et al.*, 1994, p. 728). The marriage brokerage trends are changing from mass, impersonal, commercial arrangements to personal network-based, pseudo-commercial arrangements.

⁶³ The details of the “bride contest” are illustrated later in this chapter.

Mai's Story⁶⁴

Mai was born in 1984. Her hometown is Tay Ninh, in the southern part of Vietnam. Her father is a farmer. She has three older brothers. It is a relatively small family compared with other people, but their parents had the idea that men and women are equal. Her family was fairly wealthy when she was young because her father owned a lot of land and cultivated commercial trees. However, her father was not very good at managing his fortune, and he ended up being indebted. Her brothers could not go to university and she also had to drop out of high school after the first year. The family had to sell their land and house, but still their debt wasn't gone. The debt became larger due to interest. It was about 10,000USD. It was the biggest reason why she decided to come to Korea.

For years she helped her family at home, and she worked in a shoe factory for a year before she came to Korea. It was by chance that she participated in a meeting with Korean men. One of her acquaintances at the factory asked her whether she was interested in going to the meeting. She talked only to her mother before she went there. Her mother told her to ask many questions when she met men. But when she went to the meeting place (at a hotel), there were literally 100 girls. She thought that she did not have a chance, because there were so many beautiful girls for only three Korean men. The meeting process consisted of three stages. It started in the morning and continued until afternoon. During the first stage, there were three men sitting in a big room. Many women presented themselves to them. Without any conversation, the men chose about 10 women. The second stage was similar; the men looked at them more carefully but there was still no conversation. They finally chose 3 women among 10.

⁶⁴ This is not the interviewee's real name. This interview was chosen because it provides a more detailed story of one Vietnamese woman's experience with a marriage brokerage agency. Her socio-economic background is "typical" but the form of marriage and family life is not.

During the final stage they held conversations. Men were asked about their family, occupation, and age. Women were asked whether they could read and calculate. During that phase, Mai was informed that her potential husband was a lawyer and had two children. If they found that everything was okay, they would go shopping and spend time together. She stayed with her husband until 10 o'clock. She said that she was very proud and happy that she was selected from among 100 beautiful girls. (She used the term "pass" as if she had passed an exam).

When she told her parents that she was going to Korea, they were against the idea because they knew that her future husband had two kids already and that it was not his first marriage. But her decision was firm. Her husband visited her family and gave her parents about \$300 and gave her \$100. Her friends and neighbors were also worried because they did not know anyone who had married a Korean man. There were some Taiwanese–Vietnamese couples but she was the first person in the neighborhood to marry a Korean man. The neighbors thought Koreans were stingy and that Korean women had a hard life—they watched Korean soap operas on TV and Korean women were always waiting for their husbands at home, helping their husbands take their jackets off, and preparing meals when they came home from work. Vietnamese men do not expect that kind of assistance from women.

After her decision was made, she stayed at the agency. The owner of the agency was a Korean man and his wife was a Vietnamese from Tay Ninh. The agency ran a Korean-language class. She stayed at the agency and took classes for two months. Her husband paid for this. It was in a three-story building. The first floor was a living room, the second floor was for the broker and his nephew, and the third floor was accommodations for the women who were going to Korea. They shopped and cooked

together there. There were about 10 girls. Five of them married through the process mentioned above, and the others married through the picture process. She explained that there were normally two processes. In the first, Korean men come to Vietnam and meet women; in the second, brokers send pictures to Korea and Korean men select one of them in Korea and come to Vietnam to meet the woman they chose.

Mai came to Korea in 2004 and began to suspect that her husband might not be a lawyer. She asked her husband whether he was really a lawyer. He assured her that he was a lawyer. However, she discovered that he was a driver. She was very upset about it, but he took her out to make her feel better. After about 6 or 7 months, she asked her husband for money to send her family because her family was indebted. When her husband refused, they had a big fight. Her husband finally called the broker and asked for advice. The broker suggested that he find a job for her if he could not give her money, so he did find her a job. She worked at a canteen for 5 months and saved about \$5,000. It was hard work. She only had two days off each month and worked until late. In the mornings she had to prepare meals and do household chores. Initially, her husband and her mother-in-law insisted that her salary go into her husband's bank account. But when she earned \$1,000 the first month, she cried to see that money. Her husband was moved and told her to send all the money to her family. She sent a total of \$7,600 including her salary, her husband's contribution, and her savings from their living expenses. Now her family has cleared its debt and her parents are building a house. She is very happy about her achievements, but has regrets; if she had come to Korea a little earlier, then her brothers would have been able to attend a university. Since her daughter's birth, she no longer sends money. From time to time, she performs day labor during harvest times because her husband's parents work in agriculture. She spends money on her daughter and

herself. In general, she knows that she has an economically better life in Korea. However, she feels lonely because her husband is always out, and whenever he is at home, he is on the Internet. In addition, his teenage son gives her a headache. But she did not want to talk about this.

5.2 Transnational Marriage Brokerage Process

5.2.1 The Marriage Tour

Commercially arranged cross-border marriage is usually known for “a week marriage tour package” or “bride contest.” It usually takes at least 3 to 4 months from when a prospective bridegroom visits a marriage brokerage agency until his bride arrives in Korea. Although it is hard to generalize, the process is as follows, according to the brokers I interviewed. A prospective bridegroom contacts a marriage brokerage agency and becomes a “member.” To be a member, the prospective bridegroom submits basic documents, including a family register and CV. The prospective bridegroom then visits Vietnam for a matching and a wedding. It is usually a five- to seven-day tour. As Illustrations 5.1 and 5.2 show, the schedule for such a visit is quite busy. Meeting prospective partners, getting married, and honeymooning all happen within 5 days. A medical examination is also conducted while the prospective bridegroom stays in Vietnam.

He returns to Korea with his bride’s documents, including her family register, birth certificate, proof of marital status (single status), and a copy of her resident registration. He reports his marriage to the Korean government and sends proof of the marriage and other relevant documents to Vietnam in order to obtain an interview with Vietnamese authorities. He also sends documents to the Korean government in order to obtain a visa for his wife. Documents include his family register with the wife’s

name, a reference, a note of confirmation of the wife's health, proof of taxation, a copy of his bank book, a real estate register, and proof of employment or any equivalent proof.

In Vietnam, the bride reports her marriage to the Vietnamese government and sets a date for the interview with Vietnamese authorities. This is a new change since the new law (Decree 69) in Vietnam was implemented in 2006. The Vietnamese government requires an interview of the couple with Vietnamese authorities in all cases of cross-border marriage. Once the date is set, the prospective bridegroom visits Vietnam again and participates in the interview with his wife. After the interview, the wife applies for a visa at the Korean Embassy or Consulate.

A wife stays at the dormitory run by the recruiter in Vietnam until she leaves for Korea. Most agencies mentioned that they run education programs, including Korean-language and culture classes, but interviewees who stayed in the dormitory stated that they did not learn anything while they stayed there and also did not receive the promised stipends that brokers promised them and their husbands when they married. One of the interviewees described this dormitory as a "prison," and once she escaped this dormitory went back home because she missed her family so much. She came back to the dormitory later but was scolded severely. It seems that the underlying purpose of the dormitory is keep brides from changing their minds and running away until they depart for Korea.

Illustration 5.3 shows the itemized budget that a broker I interviewed had presented on his website. Looking at the logistics of this process, some of the documents need to

be translated and authenticated, health proof is required, the wedding is organized in Vietnam, and the husband travels to Vietnam twice before the wife ultimately flies to Korea. Not only brokers in the marriage brokerage agencies, but also government authorities, and those involved in notary offices, medical centers, airlines, hotels, restaurants, local transportation, photos, dress, hair, and makeup are involved in this process. Hence, it is not just cross-border marriage brokerage agencies that constitute this international marriage industry.

Day	Time	Details
SAT	8:00 pm	Departure from Incheon Airport
	1:00 am	Arrival in Ho Chi Minh City
	1:00 am	Check in at hotel
SUN	Morning	Meeting
	Afternoon	City tour and shopping
	Evening	Meeting bride's parents
MON	Morning	Medical checkup
	Afternoon	Medical checkup
	Evening	Bridegroom and staff meeting
TUE	Morning	Wedding
	Afternoon	Honeymoon
WED	Morning	Honeymoon
	Lunch	Vietnamese seafood
	Evening	Return to Ho Chi Minh City
THUR	Morning	Guchi tour
	Afternoon	Last meeting
	Dinner	Korean restaurant
	9:30 pm	Airport

Illustration 5.1 A Detailed schedule of Marriage Tour of Bridegroom (from interview with kb2)

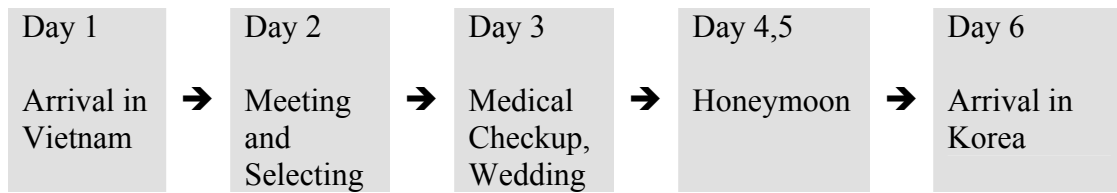


Illustration 5.2 Schedule of Cross-border Marriage tour of Bridegroom to Vietnam (modified from Ko *et al.*, 2005)

Items	Price (Won)	Misc
2 Airfares for the bridegroom	1,500,000	Including airport fee and passport issue
Airfare for the bride	530,000	Including visa fee
Documents of bridegroom	2,400,000	Documents for two trips
Hotel and food		Including food and drinks
Transportation in Vietnam		Renting taxi and van
Wedding		Dress, makeup, photo, video, gifts for brides, reception
Marriage business operation	2,370,000	Cost for fast track of paperwork
Medical expense		STD, AIDS, mental illness checkup
Transportation for guests for wedding		Fee and cost of marriage in Vietnam
Meeting		Renting taxi and van
Translation		Including transportation of prospective brides
Marital portion	300,000	Gift to bride's parents as a sign of gratitude
Guide	700,000	Guide in Vietnam
Korean brokerage	1,200,000	After-service and office maintenance
Marriage	3,000,000	Paperwork, translation, after-service
Total	12,000,000	

Illustration 5.3 Itemized expenses for cross-border marriage tour to Vietnam (from interviewee with kb2)

5.2.2 *Selecting a Wife*

While I conducted fieldwork in Vietnam, I was able to participate in the Vietnam portion of one of the tours as an observer. I write in particular, about the meeting and selecting process in this section because it often has been a focus of concern about the cross-border marriage process. The head office in Korea organizes each trip and one person from the head office travels with each group of bridegrooms to Vietnam. They arrive in Ho Chi Minh City around midnight, and Korean staff members in Vietnam pick them up at the airport with their van. In the past, such meetings usually took place in a hotel near the airport the next day. However, as Vietnamese government regulations have become stricter, the venue and time of such meetings has changed. One of the broker interviewees mentioned that his company even uses a bus as a venue for meeting: a bus with prospective brides drives along the road and a van carrying prospective bridegrooms follows the bus, and the men board the bus one by one to meet with prospective brides. On the trip that I participated in as an observer, the matching meeting happened right after the men's arrival around midnight at the house of "big madam"⁶⁵. According to a Korean staff person in Vietnam, meetings usually happened at a hotel or a restaurant but the number of bridegroom was small in this trip so they decided to hold the meeting at Big Madam's house. Only two men arrived on this trip, and one of them had already made up his mind after he was introduced to a bride through his neighbor. He met her through a web camera.

Since it was very dark, I could not see the neighborhood of Madam's house very well.

Madam's house seemed to be located on the outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City. Her house was a typical three-story Vietnamese house. When we arrived at the house, about 25

⁶⁵ A Vietnamese woman broker who recruits Vietnamese prospective brides is called "madam". The term, "big madam" refers to the one who is in contact with Korean brokers. They are based in the city and run the dormitory for Vietnamese prospective brides.

girls were waiting in the ground-floor living room and on the staircases. The prospective bridegroom, a Korean staff member in the Vietnam office, and a Vietnamese translator who is a Korean staff member's wife sat on one side of the room and there were two empty chairs in front of them. The Korean staff member in Vietnam explained the process to the bridegrooms very briefly. It seemed that the bridegrooms did not have good knowledge of the process. Basically, it was a three-part process. During the preliminary round, the women present themselves—and their names and ages—two at a time, and the man chooses whom he likes. During the second round, the women are given information about the man—age, job, family situation—and the women can leave if they do not want to continue. During the final round, each party can ask questions, and the man makes a decision. After explaining the process, the Korean staff member in Vietnam also advised the prospective bridegroom that he had to choose enough people during the first round because quite a number of women might leave during the second round because of his physical handicap, and he did not need to take it personally if a lot of women left the room during the second stage.

The prospective Korean bridegroom looked pretty nervous. It was right after the 5-hour flight, which was his first trip to Vietnam. He was sitting on a plastic chair in a shabby house in the middle of nowhere around midnight and trying to find his lifetime partner. He seemed to have a hard time making decisions during the preliminary round. Two girls came and sat on the chairs at once, and told him their names and ages. The Korean staff member in Vietnam who was a primary organizer of the whole process in Vietnam “helped” him to make decisions by making comments such as “she looks nice,” “she seems too young,” or “you can choose both of them if you like.” The preliminary process did not take long because it was based solely on first

impressions and the provided information was only name and age. Those girls who were not chosen left the house. About 15 women stayed in the room and they stood in front of the prospective bridegroom in a single line. The Vietnamese translator provided the girls with information about him: He is 42 years old. He used to be an electronic technician but he lost one arm while he was working. He is currently unemployed and lives on an industrial hazard pension. He has parents and a brother. She read this information twice loudly and asked the girls in the room, "Is it clear? If you do not want to stay, please leave the room now." The majority of women left immediately, and 5 stayed. The bridegroom seemed a little upset about the situation even though he was told beforehand that it could happen. The Vietnamese translator pressed the 5 remaining girls again, one by one: "Do you really want to stay?"

The dynamics at that moment were quite interesting. There was a sharp contrast between the girls in the room and the Vietnamese translator and Big Madam. The latter were older and well dressed. These women seemed to have a certain authority over these girls. In particular, the translator herself had married a Korean man, and this may have helped her gain some credibility with the girls. I remember that a number of my Vietnamese women interviewees in Korea mentioned that they trusted the broker because he had married a Vietnamese woman and his wife worked with him. At the moment when the translator pressed the girls in the room, I felt that she really worried about these girls' futures as a sister or an aunt who had followed the same path in advance of them. It was an unexpected scene to me. After being pressed twice, two girls left the room in tears. Later I asked the other Korean broker (kb1) why the Vietnamese translator pressed the remaining girls so much. The Korean broker casually answered that "it is for quality control. There are some girls who remain, even though they do not really want to marry the prospective bridegroom, because the

chance of remaining during the final round and being selected is rare to them, or they may feel pressured or embarrassed about staying at the dormitory too long. Those girls tend to change their mind later. So it is better to make sure that they leave.”

There were three girls left in the room. The Korean staff member in Vietnam asked Madam “to check,” and the three girls went upstairs with Madam. To my knowledge, this was to check the girls’ bodies, which has been an issue in the media. According to the Korean staff member in Vietnam, it was to check whether the girls have any big scars on their bodies. The broker must have been concerned about this. The other broker (kb1) from Korea offered a long explanation for why the checking process is necessary for the business the next day, even though I did not ask him. “You know that the guys who come here [Vietnam] to marry are losers. They are so low quality that they demand crazy things. Once there was a guy who asked us to change a girl after he found that the girl he married had a rotten tooth. We have to make sure that these girls do not have any big scars or some evidence of giving birth on their bodies because it is easy to get fake documents in Vietnam. There is no way that we can really figure out whether they are telling us the truth. If the madam sends a girl and said that the girl has never been married, we just have to believe it. In a way, we are the managerial line and madams are the production line. This is a way to control quality. But we do not do it. Madam does it” (interview with Korean broker 2008-6-22).

The prospective bridegroom asked whether he could have time to date the girl once he made his decision. The staff member answered that he could spend a whole day before the wedding. The prospective bridegroom asked what would happen if he renounced his decision. The staff member answered that they could arrange a new

meeting but since so many girls had left the room already, it wouldn't be easy to find another one. After a while they came back, and Madam confirmed that there was no problem. The bridegroom asked the girls what they wanted to do once they were in Korea, for example, study or work. He must have heard that Vietnamese women came to Korea with "Korean dreams" to find an opportunity. The girls answered that they did not have any specific desire. They may have been told that it was safer not to talk too much about what they thought. Also, the meeting itself did not seem the right place to talk about it. The bridegroom asked again whether they had any questions for him and they answered they did not have any more questions. The question and answer did not seem substantial at all. After a couple of minutes, he was asked to make a decision, and he did. By the time we came back to the hotel where the prospective bridegrooms and staff members stayed, it was nearly 1:40 AM. This means that the whole process took less than 2 hours.

5.3 Transnational Marriage Brokerage System

5.3.1 Marriage Brokerage System between Korea and Vietnam

Brokerage practices vary widely depending on the scale of the business. The following is the system used by one of the biggest Korea–Vietnam marriage brokerage agencies in Korea, which I learned about from my interviews with brokers and from my participatory observation of the marriage brokerage process (see Illustration 5.4). Big marriage brokerage agencies tend to have their head offices in big cities and numerous local branch offices in Korea. The relationships between the head office and local branches are rather contractual or mechanical based on the division of labor. For example, a branch office recruits bridegrooms at the local level. The head office organizes trips to Vietnam, along with meetings, and the eventual weddings in Vietnam. The head office usually has a set departure date, once a week or once every

two weeks. Local branches send the recruited prospective bridegrooms to the point of departure on a designated date. In this process, the local branch receives about 35% to 47% of the membership fee that the prospective bridegroom pays and the job of the local branch office is done at this point. The membership fee varies, but it currently ranges from \$10,000 to \$13,000 (assuming 1\$ = 1000won) according to interviews in the summer of 2008. A local branch office means a local recruiter. So the head office tends to recruit “local branches.” A local branch may or may not have a physical office, although a big marriage brokerage agency tends to have office-based branches. This form of organization has developed because it is not possible for a single office, even if it is a big agency, to consistently recruit a large number of bridegrooms. This makes sense logistically for organizing trips to Vietnam. Although local branch offices recruit bridegrooms at the local level, the head office also continually recruits bridegrooms these days because it is more profitable for them.

Big marriage brokerage agencies also have branch offices in Vietnam.⁶⁶ These branch offices consist of a couple of Korean staff members and Vietnamese translators. The branch office in Vietnam has a Vietnamese partner, called a “big madam,” based in the city. Each “big madam” manages local recruiters (“small madams”) and brides in the city. Each big madam takes care of prospective brides who were sent by local recruiters. Big madams usually run a kind of dormitory in the city, and prospective brides stay at the dormitory until they get married and leave for Korea. When the meeting date is set, prospective brides are presented at the meeting. When a prospective bride gets married, the big madam receives about \$500 and she allocates money to her staff members and local recruiters.

⁶⁶ It depends on the agency. Two of the big agencies that I interviewed were based in Ho Chi Minh City. According to them, most agencies are based in Ho Chi Minh City, though there are growing businesses in Hanoi.

Unlike the office structure in Korea, the relationship between a big recruiter and a small local recruiter in Vietnam seems less formal. When it comes to local recruiters, it seems that they do not necessarily identify themselves as recruiters in the cross-border marriage industry. They just “help” neighbors who want to marry foreigners from time to time. The mother of one of my interviewees, whom I discovered working as a local recruiter during my field research, mentioned that she got to know a big recruiter in the city at the wedding of her daughter, who married a Korean man through a marriage brokerage agency, and since then she occasionally introduces girls in the neighborhood to a big recruiter in Ho Chi Minh City. She also helps complete paperwork for those in the neighborhood who want to marry foreigners. She does not have an office, but her house was decorated with photos of her daughter and her daughter’s family in Korea. People who are interested in marrying foreigners began visiting her house after hearing about her by word of mouth in the neighborhood. She mentioned that she also paid attention to single girls in the neighborhood and asked whether they were interested in marrying a foreigner. She received \$100 each time a girl she recruited married a foreigner.

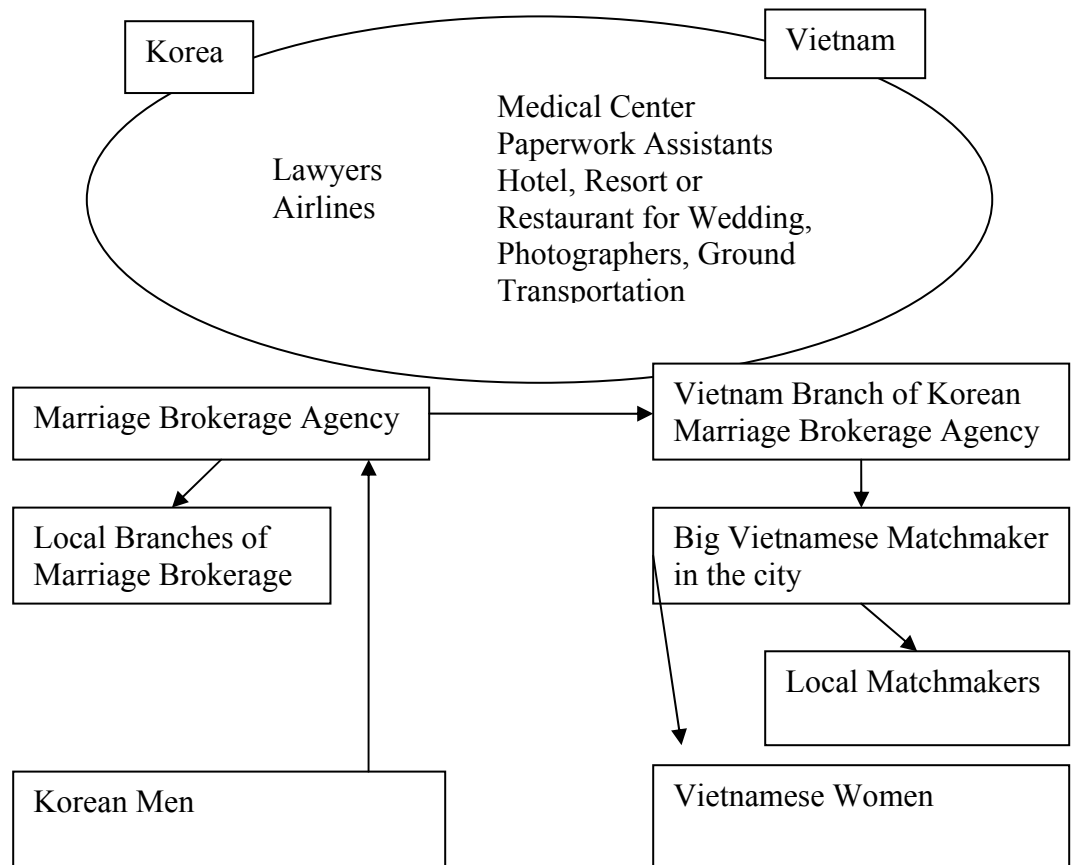


Illustration 5.4 Vietnam–Korea marriage brokerage system (modified from Ko *et al.*, 2005)

* Arrows indicate the flow of money

5.3.2 Changing Marriage Brokerage Practices with the Establishment of Networks

As the “bride contest” became a social issue in both countries and the migrants’ network grew, a new matching method (“one-to-one matching”) was introduced in the cross-border marriage brokerage industry. According to this method, a Korean man meets a potential spouse through a Web camera and makes up his mind before he goes to Vietnam. This method reflects the changes in the marriage brokerage practice. Interviewee kb1 mentioned that 90% of Korean–Vietnamese marriages happened

through “bride contests” organized by agencies from about 2003 to 2006, but these days, he thinks that 40% to 50% of marriages are organized by individuals through their networks of families and friends. The nature of the business practice is changing from introducing prospective spouses to assisting with documents and organizing trips and weddings. This change has occurred not only because of government regulation but also because a significant number of Korean men and Vietnamese women have already married, and they tend to introduce their single family members and neighbors to each other. It was evident that most Vietnamese women interviewees who had lived in Korea for more than three years had introduced others, often their sisters or neighbors, to their husbands’ friends or relatives. Since the paperwork process takes a long time and is costly for individuals, Korean–Vietnamese couples who introduce their single acquaintances tend to contact the marriage brokerage services that they themselves used in order to ask for assistance. Although the establishment of personal networks may contribute to reducing the role of marriage brokerage agencies, these agencies continue to play a role in the process of cross-border marriage, just in a different manner.

The “after service team” is an important part of marriage brokerage agencies because it continues the “business,” and it creates an interesting dynamic between brokers and multicultural families. Several interviewees mentioned that companies regularly contact newlywed couples and offer counseling or translating services. They said that “after-service” is important because it influences their companies’ reputation, and the fact that a large number of couples maintain a good family life is a source of their company’s credibility. Indeed, they run a Web-based community of couples and maintain the informal relationship quite actively. Members of this community post photos of their families and celebrate newborn babies. It seems that personal

relationships among multicultural families have been built within the community of Korean–Vietnamese couples even though the community has been created by a commercial agency.

I found that brokers often position themselves as men who have married foreign women and who maintain good family relationship. They thus try to establish a brotherly relationship with his customers. During the interviews, brokers often presented themselves as a counselor on family problems and a messenger between families in Vietnam and Korea. Brokers said that they help organize family visits to Vietnam for married couples, deliver money from the couple to Vietnamese family members, and checking on the well-being of their families in Vietnam. The transnational nature of international marriage brokerages and the fact that they are mobile creates room for them to expand their roles. Besides these practical matters, the fact that they have married Vietnamese women provides a certain kind of legitimacy to their acting as counselor. The formal nature of customer and service provider becomes blurred as they continue to maintain the relationship through counseling and other personal exchange.

It is worth noting that this information is based on my interviews with brokers and my observations and research of this industry. However, I noticed that most of my interviewees who married Vietnamese women did not necessarily maintain a good relationship with their brokers. One of the biggest reasons is that they realized later that the brokers had cheated them during the marriage process. One of the husbands mentioned that he realized that his wife's family had received less than 20% of the money that he had given to the broker. He did not realize for several months, however, until he was able to communicate with his wife. The women I interviewed said that

they preferred to stay in touch with other friends or neighbors to gain support or advice, rather than communicate with brokers, although some of them mentioned that they occasionally receive calls from their broker to ask whether they know any single men. They identified local support groups such as the Dangjin Cultural Center, a local multicultural family center, or church for alternatives. They also know other multicultural families in their neighborhood through these organizations or through their personal networks. Recently they formed an informal network of husbands of Vietnamese marriage migrants in the country, and they also try to bring multicultural families together for dinners or picnics.

5.4 Government Regulation of the Marriage Brokerage Industry and Its Practice

The characteristics of the marriage brokerage system between Korea and Vietnam are very complex and ambiguous to define. First, the system is legally ambiguous. While commercial marriage brokerage agencies are legal in Korea, they are illegal in Vietnam. The only organization that deals with cross-border marriages in Vietnam legally is the Women's Union, a governmental organization. The cross-border marriage brokerage system requires that there be parties in both countries. As long as one party is not legally recognized, the whole system cannot be entirely legal. Second, the degree of formality of relationships among people in the brokerage process varies. While the relationship between a prospective bridegroom and a broker in Korea is a formal customer and service provider relationship, the one between a prospective bride and a broker in Vietnam seems to be a more informal and personal one. Furthermore, the degree of formality depends on the stage of the process and the level of locality. For example, the relationship of a prospective bride or bridegroom with a local recruiter may be more informal than the one with an organizer of a trip or a meeting. In other words, the boundary between commercial relationships and human

relationships is not clear. Finally, the system is considered by many to be morally ambiguous. Whether a commercially arranged marriage is socially acceptable or not matters, especially when it incorporates what are often considered unjust practices, such as brides contest. For example, one of the practices of cross-border marriage brokerages, often called the “bride contest,” has been problematized because the process blatantly objectifies and commodifies Vietnamese women; hence, it violates the human rights of Vietnamese women. These ambiguities and differences in the cross-border marriage brokerage processes seem to be bound each other.

5.4.1 South Korea

The Korean government concerned itself with the marriage of rural men beginning in the late 1980s, and local government officials and organizations have devised various solutions to the problem since then. While 26 local governments implemented bills to support the international marriage of local bachelors in 2005 and 2006, a new law regulating marriage brokerage agencies was implemented in 2008 after the absence of regulation from 1999 to 2008. The Support for Multicultural Families Act (Act. No. 8937) was implemented in the same year.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the bill to support international marriages for local bachelors was implemented in the context of the crisis of rural communities. However, it is hard to rule out the possibility that brokers were involved in the policy-making process. What I found during my research is that commercial marriage brokerage agencies were often involved in the process of implementing this policy. For example, some municipalities selected one commercial marriage brokerage agency to conduct the international marriage projects. According to one interviewee, his agency carried out the international marriage projects of multiple local

governments. The debate on the bill recorded in the minutes of one municipality suggested that commercial marriage brokerage agencies were involved in lobbying for this policy.

K: Are we going to support the marriages between Koreans?

Y: No.

K: Then, isn't there an equity issue? I do not understand why we should support international marriage.

Y: Marriage among Koreans is the most desirable but it has not worked out. That's why we came up with this solution.

...

K2: Where did you get this idea?

Y: There is an international marriage project at the Province level. It was motivated to keep up with the province project.

K: You know that marriage brokerage agencies are very commercial. This bill may be interpreted as approving this commercial characteristic. Why do not we try to organize a matching meeting for single people [instead of hiring marriage brokerage agencies]?

O: I talked to the person from the marriage brokerage agencies a couple of times. If one applies for an international marriage, one goes to China or Vietnam and meets about 10 women there. . . .

K: Then, say, one is selected to participate in an international marriage project. Does it mean that he has to marry to receive the funds?

O: The marriage brokerage agency will take care of it.

K3: I think this law was made as a result of lobbying by marriage brokerage agencies. I think giving financial support for newborn babies in rural areas is a better idea. I do not know how this law was passed at the province level, but if they cared about rural communities, they would have not made this kind of law (99th Geoje City Council, 2006-4-21 pp. 263–274).

Indeed, it was puzzling that these bills were implemented during 2005 and 2006, nearly two decades after the rural bachelor's marriage issue became widely discussed, even if we take into account that low fertility became a national issue and marriage became an important policy agenda. As shown above, marriage brokerage agencies played an important role in realizing this bill. Whether intended or not, this bill allowed government funds to be used to support the marriage brokerage industry.

In addition, however, the central government showed a willingness to regulate the marriage brokerage industry by implementing a law to regulate marriage brokerage agencies in 2008. The purpose was to regulate the commercial marriage market, especially the cross-border marriage market, which had become a social issue. All companies in this business are now required to register. In order to register, companies must meet a certain standard and participate in an education program. It is often described as a victory of civil society, but there also seem to be more conflicts of interest associated with this legislation that are beyond the scope of this research.

I have found that the commercial marriage brokerage industry was also involved in the process of implementing the regulation policy. As the marriage-migrants' network continued to be established, the marriage brokerage industry began to lose its share of the market and attempted to monopolize the business by introducing the registration system for brokers. I participated in one of the workshops as an observer for people in the international marriage brokerage business organized by the Korean Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City before the legislation was enacted. One of the controversies involved the boundaries of the marriage brokerage business. Big agencies had already formed a national association⁶⁷ and pushed the agenda that all the individuals should register to the government in order to do business as marriage brokers.

It is extremely difficult to draw a line between commercial businesses and personal affairs, however, given the fluid nature of marriage brokerages and of marriage itself. For example, a Korean man who had married a Vietnamese woman introduced a

⁶⁷ There are several associations of marriage brokerage businesses. The Korean Foreign Matchmakers Association (<http://kfman.or.kr/>) and the Korea International Wedding Counselor Association (<http://www.kiwca.com/info/info.asp>) are two prominent associations of international marriage brokerage companies. The purpose of these associations is to protect the interests of broker agencies.

Korean friend to a friend of his wife's and received some rewards from his friend and his wife's friend. In this case, the issue is whether this activity is that of a commercial marriage brokerage and whether he must therefore register. A broker interviewee shared his opinion about this legislation, saying that "we are the ones who lobbied for this legislation initially but now it's become a pain in our necks. It is pointless if all the people who are involved in marriage brokerage do not register. Anyway, it does not really matter for us. We know enough people and we can use their names instead of our company name and claim that the marriage is organized between individuals." The marriage brokerage industry is not just an object of regulation. The industry actively intervenes in the policy-making process. In addition, it constantly finds a way to go around the legal boundaries by exploiting the informal nature of marriage brokerage and personal relationships.

5.4.2 Vietnam

Because the marriage brokerage practices for cross-border marriage became a social issue in Vietnam, the Vietnamese government implemented strict policies on regulating commercial marriage brokerages in 2002 and 2006 (Decree 68 and Decree 69). However, despite the strict official gestures, the practice does not seem to have disappeared only diversified.

According to Decree 68 in 2002, the Women's Union, a governmental mass organization, is the only entity legally permitted to deal with cross-border marriages, and the Women's Union can run Marriage Support Centers. As of 2008, nine Marriage Support Centers under the Women's Union were in operation, including one in Ho Chi Minh City. Commercial marriage brokerages are banned in Vietnam. According to the staff member at the Marriage Support Center in Ho Chi Minh City, this center is

distinguished from commercial marriage brokerage agencies because no monetary transaction takes place. Despite the government's efforts, the commercial marriage brokerage business continues to operate, as the increasing number of cross-border marriages shows. Rather, some Korean marriage brokerage agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local women's union and used it legal grounds for their business.⁶⁸

The job description for the Marriage Support Center staff members is very similar to what the commercial marriage brokerage agencies do. A Vietnamese single woman who wants to marry a foreigner can contact a Marriage Support Center and obtain counseling from a staff member in there. A staff member gives the single woman a full perspective on cross-border marriage, including the downside of this kind of marriage. If this single woman still wishes to marry a foreigner after the counseling, a staff member files her details and preferences and arranges a meeting with a foreign man. This center also runs a dormitory and provides Korean-language class and other homemaking classes. This is very similar to what commercial marriage brokerage agencies do, except there is no monetary transaction involved, and this center does not recruit foreign bridegrooms. Then how do they find prospective foreign bridegrooms? A staff member admitted that the center works with a Korean agency because it is a responsible one. However, the supplier of foreign husbands is a Korean commercial marriage brokerage agency, and each Korean man pays that agency in order to meet a Vietnamese woman. Vietnamese women usually do not pay in the case of

⁶⁸ One Korean agency took Memorandum of Understanding with Women's Union in Ho Chi Minh City (<http://www.pimwedding.com/index1.jsp>.)

The other agency emphasized that they worked with the Women's Union in Hanoi and Haiphong. They advertised that they were the only legal agencies. They also posted the photos of the meeting with the Women's Union on the web. (<http://www.royalsangsa.co.kr/>).

commercially arranged marriages in the southern part of Vietnam.⁶⁹ Under the current Vietnamese legal framework whether this agency is responsible or not is not an issue. However, it does not seem possible for Marriage Support Centers to function without Korean partners. There have been discussions to screen the quality of Korean prospective bridegrooms among NGOs, but it proved practically impossible to do so⁷⁰.

The Vietnamese government amended Decree 68 in 2006 in order to more strictly regulate cross-border marriages organized by illegal matchmakers. As I have said, a couple must obtain a joint interview with the Justice Department to prove that they are marrying voluntarily and that they are able to communicate each other. The following are the detailed contents of Decree 69:

Within 20 days after receiving regular marriage papers and fees, justice departments will interview the two parties concerned at departmental headquarters to check if they are getting married voluntarily, if they are able to communicate in a common language and understand each other. A notice on their marriage will be posted at the department and at the district people's committees of the Vietnamese party's residence and the permanent residence of the foreign party on seven successive days. Marriages are illegal if the interview and examination results show that the marriage is supported by illegal matchmakers, not in accordance with national customs and morals, a result of women-trafficking and for sexual abuse, or for other profit-making purposes. (Vietnam News 2006-07-28)

This amendment clearly speaks to the debate surrounding the commodification of Vietnamese women, which was sparked by a news article on the marriage brokerage process (Chosunilbo 2006-4-21). Vietnamese students in Korea held a press conference to problematize the tone of this news article in Korea, and this became an issue of national pride in Vietnam. The Women's Union in Vietnam sent letters of

⁶⁹ While women don't pay in most cases, some agencies based in the North have started to charge women as well for their services.

⁷⁰ Immigration Office started to offer mandatory information sessions for those who married foreigners from 2010.

complaint to the relevant Korean authorities. As a result of these attempts, it became extremely difficult to obtain cross-border marriages in some places such as Tay Ninh and Dong Thap. It is not clear why these two regions took particularly strong measures. I suspect that the volume of marriage migration was so high that the local government grew concerned about it.

According to the Vietnamese interviewees who are from Tay Ninh, there was a common joke among people that “all the single women except the handicapped went abroad for marriage.” While there has been considerable opposition to commercially arranged cross-border marriages within Vietnam, the practice at the local level may be seen as more beneficial. One of the brokers whom I interviewed commented on the situation as follows: “If you meet people who are in charge of paperwork for cross-border marriages in the local government, they do not have a strong will to stop cross-border marriage. It is good for them and their local economy. There is no reason to stop. It is merely a media ploy.”

5.5 Commodification of Vietnamese Brides and Intimacy

The marriage brokerage industry has been problematized because it commodifies Vietnamese women. The most blatant form of this appears in the advertisements of marriage brokerage agencies. “Marry a Vietnamese Girl⁷¹” signs have been hung on pretty much every single street corner since 2001 in Korea. These signs usually include problematic statements that objectify Vietnamese women such as “Pay later,” “100% guaranteed payback,” and “They never run away” (Illustration 5.5). According to one interviewee, this was the most important means of advertisement until 2007 in

⁷¹ “베트남 처녀와 결혼하세요” In Korean, “처녀” means both “single woman” and “virgin.”

Korea, when it was banned legally⁷² because it contained the expressions commodifying Vietnamese women. Nonetheless, this type of advertising had created an association between commercially arranged marriages and Vietnamese women in Korea.

Common descriptions of Vietnamese women on the websites of marriage brokerage agencies include: “sharing the Confucian culture [respecting elders and husband], having similar appearance, innocent [do not care about men's education, family background and age], diligent and family oriented” (compiled from the seven active websites of international match making agencies). Whether this description is accurate or not, it represents what is thought to be valued by a certain category of men in this marriage market. The kinds of virtues regarded to be absent or preferred at the individual level are closely connected to the broad socio-economic situation in Korea. Hence, the issue here is not just the commodification of the individual body, but what kind of qualities are emphasized in the process and what the structural contexts of this commodification process continue to be.

⁷² The regulation on outdoor advertisements was amended in 2007. It bans advertisements that include racial or sexual discrimination (5.2.5).



Vietnamese Virgin
Cost 7800\$: First Marriage,
Second Marriage, The
handicapped are welcomed
Up to 65 years old=100%
marriage

Vietnam
International Marriage
Pay later
First Marriage / Second
Marriage / The handicapped



Vietnam
Never run away
Specialized in international
marriage

Illustration 5.5 Advertisements for marriage to Vietnamese women

(Source: Chamyeoyeondae <http://blog.peoplepower21.org/International/17210>,
Hangyere 2007-1-29)

In a way, the development of the marriage brokerage industry represents the process of the commodifying of intimate life. The language above obviously suggests the commodification of Vietnamese women. However, what is sold exactly in this process? When we say that women are commodified, does it mean that the object of commodification is the women's physical body or what women offer? Is the commodification problematic because of the object, the process or the impact? Commodification of women has been problematized because it limits the potential

which women can achieve as human beings by subordinating them under the specific power relations. It raises the questions of male desire, power relations, and racism.

What is distinctive about the rise of marriage brokerage industry is that it indicates the commodification of the family formation process which carries out particular functions within the society. In addition to the questions of women's subordination, it allows us to ask questions about the demographic, socio-economic and cultural conditions that allow for the rise of the commercial marriage brokerage industry and to assess the consequences for the economy and society. In the next chapter, I will discuss the conditions behind the emergence of new marriage markets and migration systems in Asia.

CHAPTER SIX:
THE EMERGENCE OF THE REGIONAL MARRIAGE MARKET: TRENDS
IN CROSS-BORDER MARRIAGE

Cross-border marriage in Asia is not a new phenomenon. The trends and patterns of cross-border marriages have changed over time, and the formation of the cross-border marriage market reflects certain changes in historical political economic conditions. For example, cross-border marriages between Japanese and Koreans, French and Vietnamese (Vu, 2006), and Pakistanis and Pakistani British (Charsley, 2008) are related to the colonial and post-colonial relations between the respective countries, and cross-border marriages between Koreans and Korean Americans and between Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans (Thai, 2003; Goodkind, 1997) are related to political economic turmoil such as wars or other political-economic relations that created diasporas. These patterns of cross-border marriage among the same ethnic groups continue to exist.

One of the recent changes in cross-border marriages is the emergence of new destinations such as Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, and Korea. This recent trend of cross-border marriages seems distinctive in terms of its volume and the active role of commercial matchmaking agencies. Furthermore, the destinations have a great deal in common, including, in particular, their economic development experiences. How do we explain the emergence of new destinations for marriage migration? If cross-border marriage is a historically specific phenomenon, what kind of historical specificity has enabled this current trend of cross-border marriage to develop? These are important questions that have not been explored much in the studies of cross-border marriage, and which I attempt to explore in this chapter using the case of Korea and Vietnam.

The first section briefly explores the emergence of new destinations of marriage migration in Asia including Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Korea, which happen to share similar economic development paths⁷³ (Wade, 1990; Jones and Findlay, 1998). The cross-border marriage coincides with a changing mode of social reproduction that corresponds to the structural changes led by the compressed economic development path of these destinations. In addition, the trends were expedited by the formation of the commercial marriage brokerage industry with the development of communication technology including the internet. The second section of this chapter explores the case of Korea and Vietnam more specifically and explains how the trends of cross-border marriage changed and the marriage market between the two countries was formed.

6.1 A Question of Emergence of New Destinations of Marriage Migration and Economic Development in Asia

6.1.1 Current Trends of Cross-Border Marriage and Studies

Marriage migration to Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea from other parts of Asia has become increasingly visible during the last two decades.⁷⁴ In 2003 the number of cross-border marriages was estimated to be 36,260 to Japan, 54,634 to Taiwan, 8,862 to Singapore, and 25,658 to South Korea.⁷⁵ The percentage of cross-border marriages of total marriages in 2003 was 4.9% in Japan, 32.1% in Taiwan,

⁷³ Wade (1990) noted that the economic transformation from a predominantly agricultural base to that of a manufacturing exporter in Japan during the 1950s and 1960s is similar to that in Taiwan and Korea in the 1960s and 1970s (pp. 47–48).

⁷⁴ This is an assessment based on the data from the destinations. There are other trends, such as cross-border marriage in the border-share areas and cross-border marriage between Southeast Asian women and men in the global North. However, the relevant data are less accessible than the complete data from the origins. The only origin that provides complete data may be the Philippines. And yet Jones and Shen (2008) noted that marriage migration to East Asia is the most important in terms of sheer numbers. See Jones and Shen (2008) for more complete mapping of the trends of cross-border marriage in East and Southeast Asia.

⁷⁵ Calculated from Jones and Shen (2008) for Singapore, Statistics and Information Department, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, *Vital Statistics of Japan*, and the Korean National Statistical Office.

26.5% in Singapore, and 8.4% in South Korea. In this type of union, the foreign spouses are predominantly women: 77.5% in Japan, 75.8% in Singapore, and 74.8% in Korea.⁷⁶ (See Figures 6.1 through 6.3)

It is hard to estimate the total number of cross-border marriages because of the availability of data. The number of cross-border marriages from 1997 to 2007 in Korea is 261,079. Of those marriages, 186,758 were between Korean men and foreign women⁷⁷ (Vital Statistics 2007, National Statistical Office). The total number of cross-border marriages of men and women in Taiwan from 1998 to 2003 is 250,429 (Department of Population, Ministry of the Interior, Taiwan, calculated from Jones and Shen, 2008). These women marriage migrants are mostly from other parts of Asia, but the origins of brides vary depending on the destination country. For example, the three biggest origins for marriage migration to Japan in 2003 are China, the Philippines, and Korea; for Taiwan they are China, Vietnam, and Indonesia; for Korea they are China (Korean Chinese and Han Chinese), Vietnam, and the Philippines; and for Singapore the top countries of origin are Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and China. Marriage between people of the same ethnicity is still observed in Taiwan and Korea (Jones and Shen, 2008). For example, in 2003, 64.7% of marriage migrants in Taiwan were ethnic Chinese, and in 2007, 33.8% of marriage migrants in Korea were ethnic Korean (Jones and Shen, 2008; Ministry of Administration and Security, 2007).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ In 2009, 167,090 marriage migrants lived in Korea, of whom 149,879 were women (Ministry of Administration and Security, 2009). The difference in numbers of marriage migrants partly reflects the number of divorce. The number of divorce between Korean and those with foreign origins from 2002 to 2007 is 26,816 (Vital Statistics 2007, National Statistical Office) .

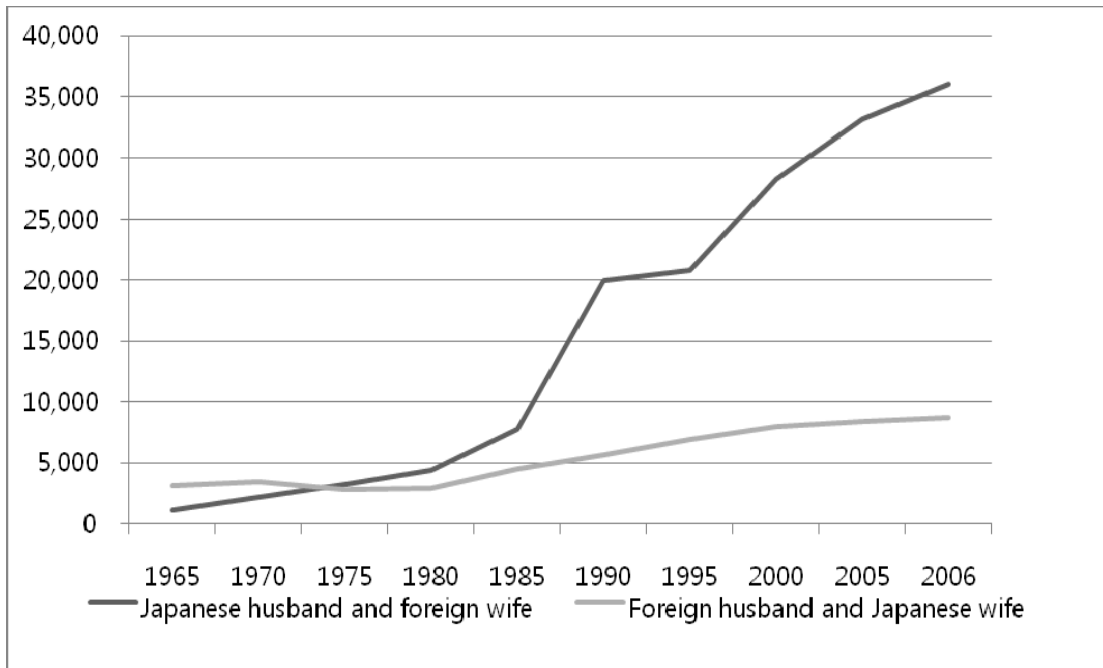


Figure 6.1 Marriage between Japanese and foreigners by sex, 1965–2006.

(Source: Statistics and Information Department, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, *Vital Statistics of Japan*. The data prior to 1970 do not include Okinawa Prefecture. Figures are the tabulation of Japanese and foreign nationals who married in Japan.)

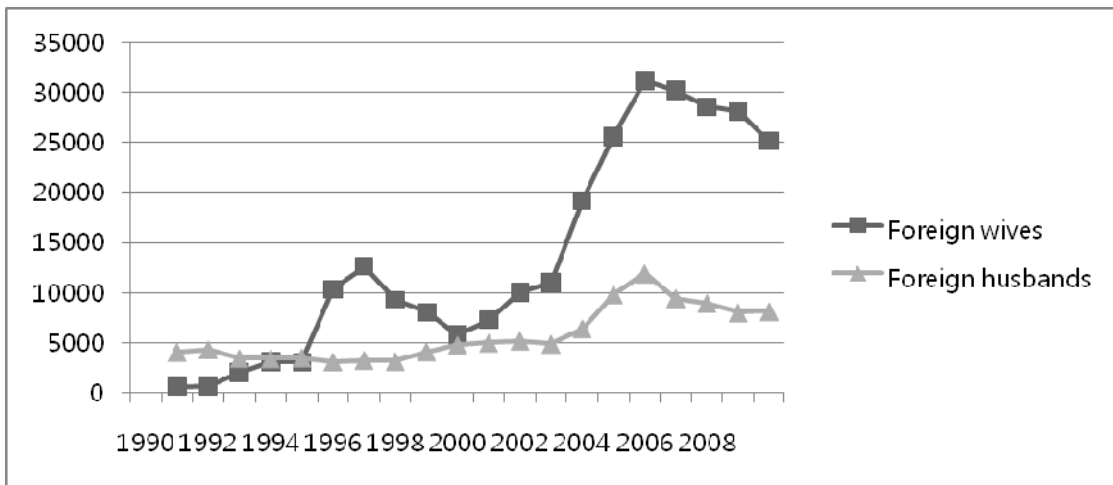


Figure 6.2 Marriage between Koreans and foreigners by sex, 1990–2009.

(Source: National Statistical Office)

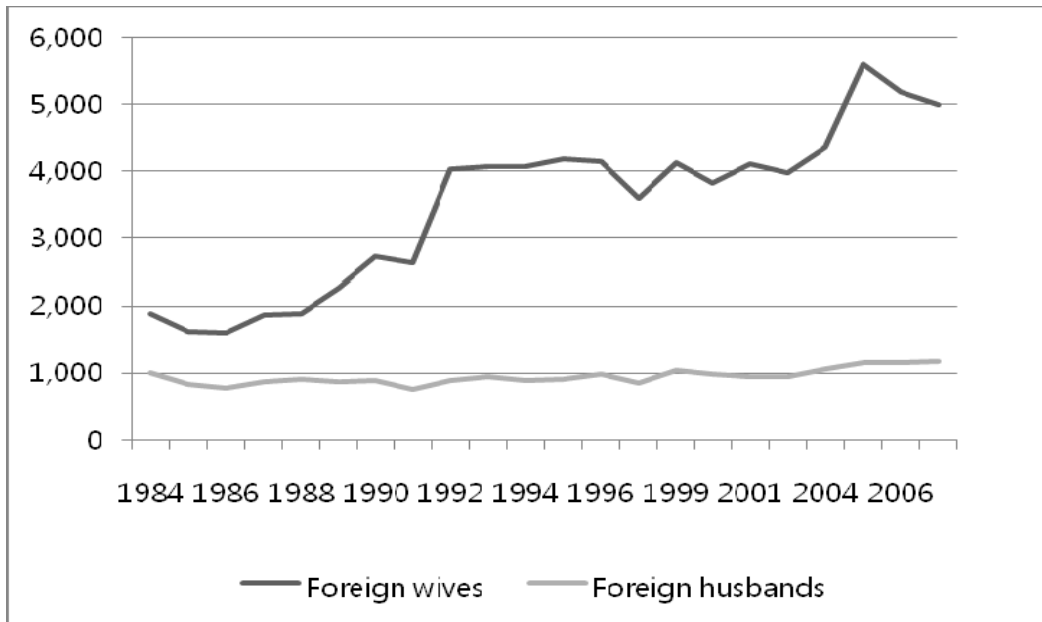


Figure 6.3 Marriage between Singaporeans and foreigners by sex, 1984–2007.
(Source: Department of Statistics, Singapore)

The pattern of cross-border marriages typically involves unions between men from wealthier countries and women from poorer countries, and this echoes the common pattern of the recent women’s labor migration (Constable, 2005). More specifically, the general pattern seems to be unions between men from wealthier countries who cannot find a spouse in the domestic marriage market because of their low income, education level, or rural background and women from poorer countries who seek economic improvement (Jones and Shen, 2008). Jones and Shen (2008) pay attention to the domestic population dynamics and point out the positive correlation between education and the proportion of remaining single women and the inverse correlation for single men. As women’s education improves and their labor participation increases, women tend to stay unmarried. On the other hand, less educated men of low income tend to remain unmarried as well. This can be read as a “marriage squeeze,” one that happens at two ends in this case (Jones, 2004). Unlike the conventional notion of “marriage squeeze,” which mainly focuses on the overall sex-ratio imbalance

among people of prime marriage age, this kind of marriage squeeze is often the result of rapid socioeconomic changes in a region. The study on marriage squeeze in Asia has focused more on the phenomenon of highly educated unmarried women than on unmarried men (Jones, 2004); however, the increase of female marriage migrants indirectly indicates that there is a marriage squeeze on men.

One of the most widely accepted explanations for this kind of marriage squeeze is “gendered hypergamy,” according to which women tend to marry older men with more education or higher income (Constable, 2005; Jones, 2004), and it is also regarded as an important component in cross-border marriage. For example, Constable (2005) identified “global hypergamy” as one of the conceptual possibilities for theorizing cross-border marriages. While gendered hypergamy may be a plausible explanatory term, it requires careful attention when used as a general analytical framework. Gendered hypergamy presumes a stratification, which tends to be reduced to economic hierarchy. The primacy of the economic dimension is prevalent in most of the literature on cross-border marriage. The mail-order-bride approach, for example, emphasizes the economic disparity between the rich groom’s country and the poor bride’s country and highlights concerns about economic structural violence against women. This approach also appears to blend structural analysis of economic disparities between states, however, with an individual utility maximization approach, as one’s national identity is translated as an individual quality in this case, and treated as a prime identity. Attempts to overcome the shortcomings of structure approach, with its blanket victimization of women from poorer countries who marry men from richer countries, and its excessive emphasis on the structural violence against these women, have emphasized the agency of women in this process and how these women

negotiate their situations.⁷⁸ These studies certainly expand the horizon of our understanding of cross-border marriages. In addition, they often engage in the notion of gendered hypergamy at least implicitly.

Linking the marriage squeeze and cross-border marriage is an important step forward; however, it is rather overly simplistic to use gendered hypergamy as a framework. According to this logic, for example, women tend to marry up, and therefore more-educated women cannot find a spouse because men tend to marry down, which in turn means that men with less education and lower income cannot find a spouse. Therefore, these men tend to look for spouses outside of the domestic marriage market, where their economic status can be translated as wealthy because of the status of their national economy within the world economy. Women, at the other end, may look for spouses outside of the domestic marriage market or stay unmarried. Put crudely, the hierarchy of national economies in the world economy is translated to one of individual quality, and this framework also assumes that this translation happens only in the population of both margins and that cross-border marriage will happen after exhausting the possibilities within the domestic marriage market.

Gendered hypergamy does not necessarily explain why men's search for a spouse outside of the domestic marriage market is so pronounced in East Asian countries in particular at this point, however. In order to answer this question, one must take structural conditions into account. I argue that the particular mode of economic development in these countries generated conditions that made certain groups of men less marriageable. In other words, a marriage squeeze at both ends indicates that men and women may have experienced the structural changes that occurred throughout the

⁷⁸ See Constable (2005), Palriwala and Uberoi (2008), and Faier (2009).

industrialization period differently. The economic development path in East Asia was based on export-oriented industrialization that depended on cheap labor for the manufacturing sector, and the industrialization process was compressed into a short period of time. The socioeconomic and demographic changes that took place, such as GDP growth, industrial structural changes, rural to urban migration, urbanization, fertility decline, and improvements in women's education and women's labor market participation, were astonishing. Hence, the marriage squeeze is not just a matter of people's individual qualifications in the marriage market but is also a structural issue associated with where these individuals belong within the social strata. For instance, being a farmer or a factory worker did not necessarily make a Korean man unmarriageable in the 1970s. The marriage squeeze is rather an indication of intensified stratification and an impasse of the ways in which social reproduction, in particular, of particular segments of the population is governed.

6.1.2 Some Commonalities of New Destinations of Marriage Migration in Asia

6.1.2.1 Rapid Industrialization and Decrease in Agricultural Sector

There is a wealth of literature on economic development in East Asia. The East Asian strategy of economic development is often characterized as an export-oriented industrialization based on labor-intensive manufacturing for the global market in the process of the “new international division of labor”⁷⁹ in the 1960s (Wade, 1990; Jones and Findlay, 1998; Mason, 2001). This led to a rapid structural transformation from an agricultural to an industrial and serviced-based economy (Mason, 2001, p. 7). As

Table 6.1 shows, the percentage of the labor force in agriculture dropped from 33.1 in

⁷⁹ This resulted in changes in production patterns “from specialized manufacturing concentrations in the older industrial countries to globally integrated production system whose labor intensive production sites have increasingly been located in the so-called newly industrializing countries” (Jones and Findlay, 1998, p. 93).

1960 to 7.3 in 1990 in Japan, from 61.3 to 18.1 in Korea, from 56.1 to 12.6 in Taiwan, and from 7.4 to 0.4 in Singapore. In addition, the value added in agriculture dropped from 13.1 in 1960 to 2.5 in 1990 in Japan, from 35.8 to 8.7 in Korea, from 28.9 to 4.1 in Taiwan, and from 3.8 to 0.3 in Singapore. Japan's industrialization started earlier than other countries' in the region, so the proportion of agriculture, in terms of both labor force and GDP contribution, is relatively lower than for Korea and Taiwan. The rates of rural to urban migration and urbanization were phenomenal. The urban population increased from 43.1% of total population in 1960 to 63.1% in 1990 in Japan, from 27.7% to 73.8% in Korea, and from 25.9% to 50.2% in 1985 in Taiwan (World Development Indicator; Speare *et al.*, 1988). Singapore is an exception for this agricultural to industrial transformation in that its dependency on agriculture was low because it is city-state. These data indicate that the labor transfer from the agricultural sector played an important role in the early phase of industrialization in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea (Jones and Findlay, 1998)

Table 6.1 Summary of Agricultural Statistics: Four East Asian Countries, 1960–1990

Statistic and period	Japan	South Korea	Taiwan	Singapore
Percentage of total labor force in agriculture				
1960	33.1	61.3	56.1	7.4
1990	7.3	18.1	12.6	0.4
Value added in agriculture (percentage of total GDP)				
1960	13.1	35.8	28.9	3.8
1990	2.5	8.7	4.1	0.3
Annual labor force growth, 1960–1990 (%)				
Combined	1.2	2.9	3.1	3.5
Agriculture	-3.9	-1.2	-1.9	-6.5
Nonagriculture	2.3	5.4	5.4	3.7

(adapted from Mason, 2001, p. 10)

6.1.2.2 Labor Shortage, Migrant Labor and Women's Labor Force Participation

In the 1980s, “labor shortage, higher labor cost, capital accumulation, and considerable investment in education and other forms of human resource development” shifted these economies into “higher value-added manufacturing and service activities and growing investment in ‘offshore production’” (Jones and Findlay, 1998, p. 89). In response to the labor shortage, various policies to integrate the women into labor force—in particular married women—were implemented, and migrant workers appeared despite relatively strict regulation. While Japan and Korea attempted to solve the problem within their domestic labor markets, Singapore and, to a certain extent, Taiwan sorted out the issue by “importing” domestic workers from other countries (Bartram, 2000; Jones and Findlay, 1998). For example, Singapore and Hong Kong started to accept domestic workers, and Taiwan later implemented this policy in 1992 (Seol and Im, 2000). It is not clear to what extent these particular policies influenced women's labor force participation, but their labor force

participation rates increased. Women's labor force participation rates increased from 45.7 in 1975 to 50.0 in 1995 in Japan, from 39.6 to 48.3 in Korea, from 38.1 to 45.3 in Taiwan, and from 29.6 to 50.1 in Singapore (Okunishi, 2001; Table 6.2).

Figure 6.5 illustrates the trend over time in women's labor force participation. In 1975 by age followed a pronounced M shape in Japan and Korea, including highest labor participation among women between the ages of 20 to 24 and the lowest between the ages of 25 to 29, then showed recovery between the age 30–49 and a decline again after the age of 50. Women were thus largely out of the labor market during prime reproductive ages and rejoined labor market again as children grew older. In 1995, the lowest point of labor participation moved from ages 25 to 29 to ages 30 to 34, and the degree of decrease became more moderate in Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Again, women's labor force participation rates in Singapore show a different trend; once it reaches its highest point, it decreases steadily. The trend in Taiwan is intermediate between Japan and Korea, and Singapore. Once the participation rate drops, it stays consistent until age 45 and then drops dramatically. Women's labor force participation drops most during the reproductive years, and probably because child care depends on the family, especially women.

Table 6.2 Women's Labor Force Participation Rate, All Adults Ages 15 and Older

Country	Census year		
	1975	1985	1995
Japan	45.7	48.7	50
South Korea	39.6 ^a	41.9	48.3
Taiwan	38.1	43.5	45.3
Singapore	29.6 ^b	44.9	50.1

(Okunishi, 2001) ^a14 and older, ^b10 and older

The trend of labor migration to Japan, Taiwan, and Korea emerged in the 1980s despite strict regulations. The patterns of migration are shown in Illustrations 6.1 and 6.2. While Singapore relaxed the regulation on labor migration as early as 1968, others were rather slow in institutionalizing labor migration (Martin, 2001; Jones and Findlay, 1998). Taiwan officially accepted foreign workers in construction in 1989, in manufacturing in 1991, and domestic helpers and caregivers in 1992 (Seol and Im, 2000). Japan and Korea did not accept unskilled migrant labor but “tacitly permit[ted] foreign students, industrial trainees and illegal entrants to take unskilled employment” (Jones and Findlay, 1998, p. 94). A work-permit system was implemented in Korea only in 2004 (<http://www.eps.go.kr/kr/index.html>).

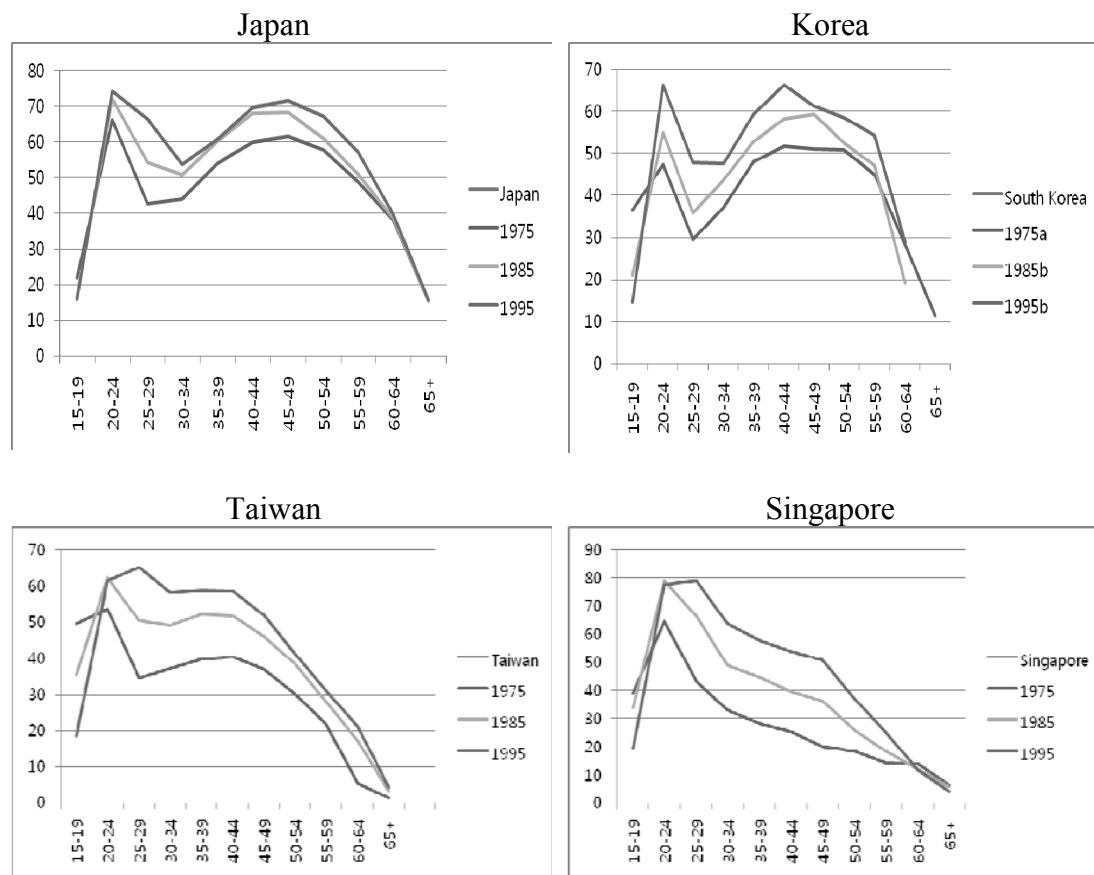


Figure 6.5 Women’s Labor Force Participation by Age (Okunishi, 2001).
a = ages 14–19; b = age 60 and older

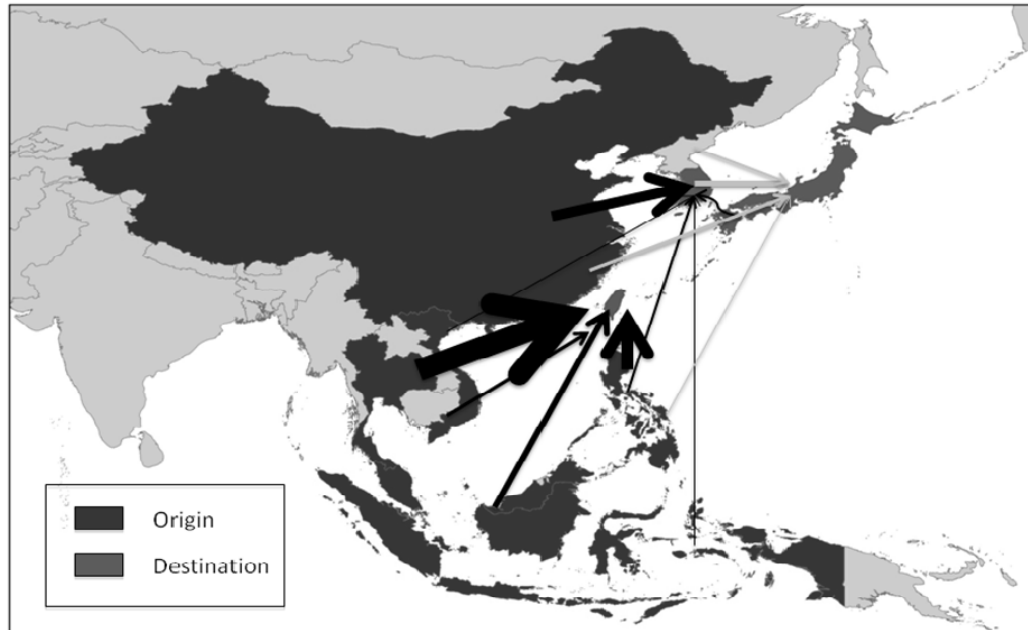


Illustration 6.1 Migration in Asia

Source: Global Migrant Origins Database 2007.

Note: Bright line reflects 10 times the volume.

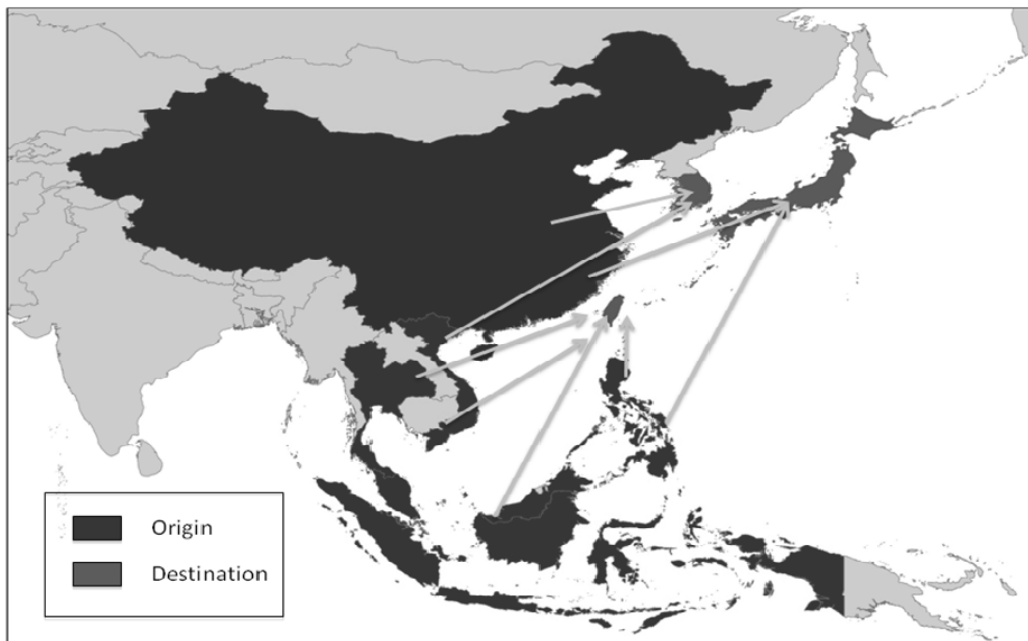


Illustration 6.2 Three major Origins and Destinations of Marriage Migration in Asia

Source: Based on Jones and Shen (2008)

Note: Volume is not reflected in the arrows.

6.1.2.3 Decline in Fertility

The fertility decline and the changes in family size occurred alongside the process of economic development in this region (See Figure 6.6). These were the consequences not only of economic development, but also of strong family-planning policies enacted as a part of economic development in Taiwan, Singapore, and Korea. They may have not influenced the labor market much in the 1980s but are thought to have a substantial impact now. In Japan, the total fertility rate was 2.0 in 1960, 1.54 in 1990, and 1.26 in 2005 (World Development Indicator). In Korea, the total fertility rate decreased from 5.66 in 1960, to 1.59 in 1990, to 1.08 in 2005 (World Development Indicator). In Singapore, the total fertility rate decreased from 5.4 in 1960 to 1.8 in 2005 (World Development Indicator). In Taiwan, the total fertility rate was 2.71 in 1978, 1.81 in 1990, and 1.11 in 2005 (Population and Housing Data, National Statistics in Taiwan).

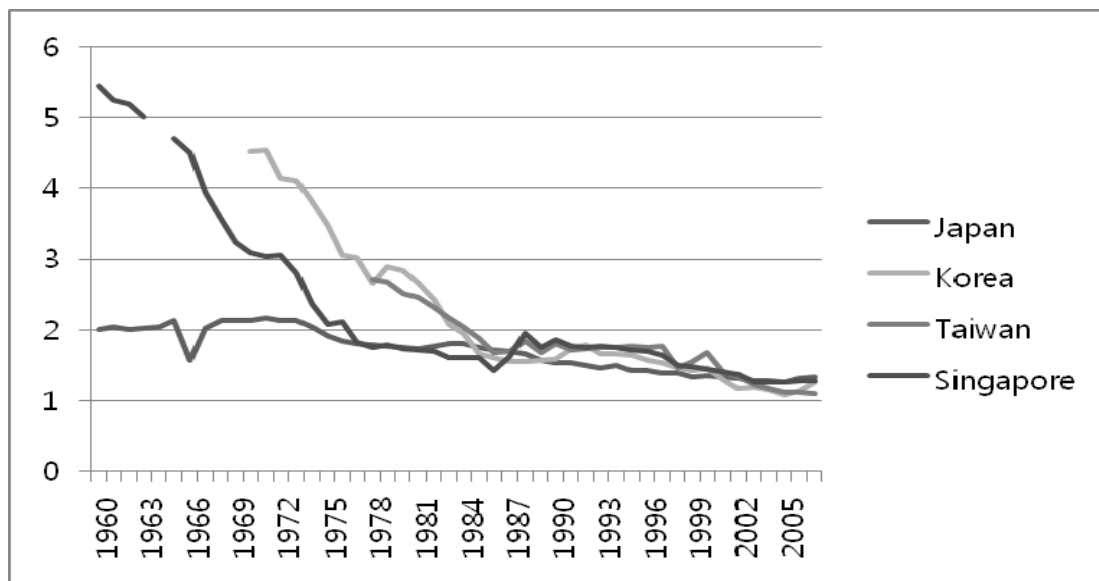


Figure 6.6 Total Fertility Rates in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore
(Source: World Development Indicator, Population and Housing Data from national statistics in Taiwan)

Jones and Findlay (1998) have argued that labor migration is related to regional economic integration. In a similar manner marriage migration may be related to structural changes associated with the economic development of individual countries, and with regional economic integration. Situating cross-border marriage within the regional context and analyzing the structural changes that have occurred in each country in the East Asian region is an ultimate research goal for the future. However, in this project I've limited my research to the case of Korea and Vietnam in order to provide an in-depth political economic context for the increase in cross-border marriage between these two particular states.

6.2 The Formation of the International Marriage Market between Vietnam and Korea

There are various theories about how migration streams are initiated and perpetuated. The most widely used framework is a push-pull theory to explore the push factors in the origins and pull factors in the destinations. For example, a high unemployment rate in the origin can be a push factor, and a labor shortage and high level of income in the destination can be pull factors. Migration theories have been developed with a focus on labor migration. Massey *et al.* (1993; 1994) summarized and evaluated the current theories of labor migration including neoclassical economics, new household economics of migration, dual labor market theory, world system theory, network theory, cumulative causation theory, institutional theory, and migration system theory. Each theory contributes to our understanding of migration with a different focus and at various levels of analysis, and all of these theories can overlap to a certain extent.

Here I focus on the latter four theories, and their application in the perpetuation of marriage migration. The thesis of network theory is that migrant networks, "sets of

interpersonal ties among migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through the ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origins,” form social capital and serve to increase migration by reducing the cost and risk of migration (Massey *et al.*, 1994, p. 728). Cumulative causation is defined as “the tendency for international migration to perpetuate itself over time, regardless of the conditions that originally caused it” (Massey *et al.*, 1994, p. 733).

Institutional theory suggests that private institutions such as commercial institutions and voluntary humanitarian organizations emerged to meet the demand of mediating the process once international migration began. Commercial institutions provide a range of services including “surreptitious smuggling across borders; clandestine transport to internal destinations; labor contracting between employers and migrants; counterfeit documents and visas; arranged marriages between migrants and legal residents or citizens of the destination country; and lodging, credit, and other assistance in counties of destination,” and humanitarian organizations provide services such as “counseling, social services, shelter, legal advice” (Massey *et al.*, 1993, p. 450).

Migration systems are characterized by “relatively intense exchanges of goods, capital and people between certain countries” and generally consist of a core receiving region and a set of specific sending countries (Massey *et al.*, 1993, p. 454). A migration system is not a fixed structure; rather it is dependent upon political economic changes such as “economic fluctuation, political upheaval or social change” (Massey *et al.*, 1993, p. 454). Network theory, cumulative causation theory, and institutional theory also intersect with migration system theory, but I will explore macroeconomic and institutional conditions in this section based on a migration system perspective.

A migration system cannot be divorced from the particular political-economic exchanges that occur among origins and destinations. In the case of Asia, the discussion on regional economic integration is important. Jones and Findlay (1998) argue that the East Asian international migration system emerged with economic integration based on their examination of institutional conditions and economic linkages such as foreign direct investment (FDI), trade, aid, and personal visits, for example, tourist flows. Martin (2001) sees growing investment and trade as an indication of Asian economic integration and suggests that increasing labor migration can serve as one of the pillars of Asian economic integration, including trade and investment. Although these discussions focus exclusively on labor migration, they are useful to understanding the structural commonality of the destinations because the identified destinations and origins of labor migration and marriage migration overlap.

Furthermore, Fawcett (1989) identified four categories of linkages in the migration system, “state to state relations; mass culture connections; family and personal networks; migrant agency activities,” and provided tangible examples such as “trade and financial flows, bilateral economic and technical assistance; international media diffusion through print, TV and film; remittance flows and correspondence from migrants; job recruitment and promotional materials and officially channeled remittances,” respectively (p. 674). These areas are also useful starting points for exploring the emergence of the marriage migration system. As discussed in the previous chapter, however, the approach to marriage migration cannot be same as the approach to labor migration. In a way, exploring the marriage migration system ultimately “genders” the current approach to migration systems. “Gendering” means exploring the gendered process of economic development and social reproduction. In

this section, I will explore the relationships between marriage migration and investment, labor migration, and cultural influences.

6.2.1 Foreign Direct Investment and Cross-Border Marriages

FDI is regarded as a key catalyst for new labor flow in a migration system (Jones and Findlay, 1998). The link between investment and labor flow is explained as follows:

“the functional role of such links in migration is that they enhance transportation and communication systems as well as interpersonal information transfer . . . when international economic linkages involve countries of very different development levels, they are likely to stimulate unbalanced transfers—small numbers of the highly skilled in one direction, and large numbers of semi- and unskilled in the other” (pp. 95–96).

Is this explanation applicable to cross-border marriage? In order for two people marry, a marriage market is required. By marriage market, I mean a pool of men and women who have potential to marry. How an international marriage market between two countries is formed is worth exploring. The literature on cross-border marriage in Taiwan highlighted FDI as a reference point from which to explore the reasons for the surge in marriages between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women (Wang and Chang, 2002; Hsia 2004). Wang and Chang (2002) suggested that “the globalized capital investment indirectly catalyzed the development of the international marriage market” (p. 95). Hsia (2004) has argued that the economic interdependence between Taiwan and Southeast Asia contributed to the increase in marriage migration by applying a world-system approach to international migration. Hsia (2004) also attempted to show the linkage between FDI and marriage migration by laying out four types of marriage brokerage by Taiwanese investors and staff persons in Southeast Asia, transnational married couples, commercial marriage brokerage companies and

Southeast Asian women who work in Taiwan, and noted that the first three are relevant to the FDI. Hsia's (2004) typology of brokers is useful, and indeed all of these types exist in the case of cross-border marriage in Korea. However, she did not account for how much each of these contributes to the full range of cross-border marriages. It is difficult to obtain accurate data to do so. However, it seems that marriages between Korean investors and staff persons in Vietnam and Vietnamese female workers occupy a relatively small proportion of cross-border marriages, judging from my interview with the brokers. Marriages through commercial arrangement or a migrants' network seem more prominent practices.

I reviewed the data on Korean direct investment in Vietnam. According to the Statistical Yearbook of Vietnam 2005, Taiwan and Korea are the first and second largest investors in Vietnam in terms of numbers of investment projects (p. 96). Figure 6.7 shows a correlation between the FDI and the number of cross-border marriages between Vietnam and Korea. The investment began around 1992 when Korea and Vietnam established diplomatic relations. According to the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) (2007), 58% of the investment has taken place since 2002. According to a KOTRA survey in Ho Chi Minh City, 68.2% of Korean investors engage in manufacturing sectors, and 65.5% invest in Southern Vietnam. This is relevant in the sense that the majority of Vietnamese marriage migrants are from Southern Vietnam. However, more layers of explanation are required in order to explain whether there is any kind of causal relationship between FDI and cross-border marriages.

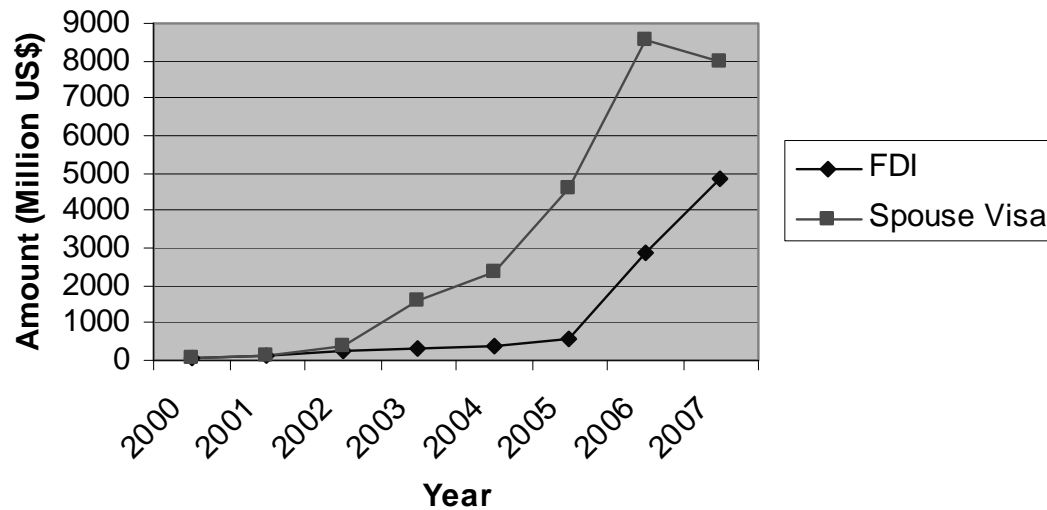


Figure 6.7 Amount of Korean FDI to Vietnam and the number of spouse visas.
(Source: KOTRA and Korean Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City)

Hsia (2004) suggested a direct relation between FDI and marriage migration. I considered the possibility that Korean investors and staff persons are involved in cross-border marriage. For example, early investment from Korea to Vietnam was concentrated on labor-intensive light industry, which attracts female labor. While working in a factory, Vietnamese women may have married Korean co-workers or been introduced through them to other Koreans. The brokers with whom I spoke were skeptical about this possibility, however. According to one of the Korean brokers in Vietnam, while there were some instances in which Korean managers married Vietnamese women or introduced Vietnamese women to their acquaintances, this has happened only relatively recently, after marriage between Korean men and Vietnamese women had become increasingly popular through marriage brokerage agencies in Korea. In addition, none of the Vietnamese women I interviewed married through this process; most of them married through marriage brokerage agencies. According to the National Survey on Multicultural Families in 2009, 66.4% of Vietnamese marriage migrants answered that they married through the commercial marriage brokerage agency (Kim *et al*, 2010). If cross-border marriage between Korea

and Vietnam is predominantly arranged by marriage brokerage agencies, the question may be whether there is any relationship between the marriage brokerage industry and FDI. Another broker, who identified himself as on the frontier of the international marriage market between Korea and Vietnam, hinted at this possibility, noting that he had gone to an industrial area where women workers reside in order to find a potential pool of candidates when he started his cross-border marriage brokerage business. While FDI may not influence cross-border marriage directly, high female population density caused by industrialization may play a role in generating a potential pool of candidates and by creating a venue for information to circulate and networks of marriage migrants to develop. The relationship between FDI and cross-border marriage is thus rather indirect. As exchanges between Korea and Vietnam have increased, business or personal networks have become established and, based on those networks, other cultural and economic exchanges—including labor migration or marriage migration have emerged. Migration agencies have played a role in this process.

6.2.2 Mass Culture Connections and Cross-Border Marriages

If FDI has helped to form a certain perception of Korea and Koreans within Vietnam, the Korean expatriot community may also have played a certain role. Their comparative wealth may have contributed to the view that Vietnamese people have which associates Korea with modernity. Even more influential than the presence of the Korean expatriot community is the Korean media. Some of the literature mentions that many Vietnamese women have developed an ideal image of Korea through watching Korean soap operas on TV (Kim, H. 2007). In the 1990s, the ownership of televisions increased dramatically within Vietnam from 2.3 million in 1990 to 3.57 million in 2000, and satellite TV and the Internet became popular in the 2000s. By 2007,

Vietnam had 17.87 million Internet users⁸⁰ (CIA, 2009). On average, 20 Korean soap operas per year have been purchased by Vietnamese TV stations since the first purchase was made in 1997 (Yoon, 2004). Korean soap operas account for 30% to 35% of the Vietnamese soap opera market (Yoon, 2004)⁸¹.

6.2.3 Labor Migration and Cross-Border Marriages

It is also worth exploring the relationships among Korean investment in Vietnam, labor exchange between the two countries, and cross-border marriage. According to the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs in Vietnam, 118,756 Vietnamese migrated to other countries for the purposes of labor during the period 1992–2000, among them 16,836 females (Table 6.3). South Korea was the biggest destination country: during the period 1991–1999, 36,107 Vietnamese migrated to Korea for work, among them 8,007 females (Dang *et al.*, 2003, appendix, Table 6.4).

⁸⁰ “This entry gives the number of users within a country that access the Internet. Statistics vary from country to country and may include users who access the Internet at least several times a week to those who access it only once within a period of several months” (CIA, 2009).

⁸¹ Indeed, it was not difficult for me to watch Korean soap operas in the rural areas, even without satellite TV, during my field research in Vietnam.

Table 6.3 Vietnam's Labor Migrants by Sex, 1992–2000 (Dang *et al.*, 2003)

Year	Total	Female	% Female
1992	816	101	12.4
1993	3,976	538	13.5
1994	9,234	986	10.7
1995	9,593	1,723	18.0
1996	12,661	2,065	16.3
1997	18,469	1,977	10.7
1998	12,197	1,447	11.9
1999	21,810	3,499	16.0
2000	30,000	4,500	15.0
Total	118,756	16,836	14.2

Note: The number of labor migrants is cumulative. Source: MOLISA (2000)

Table 6.4 Vietnam's Labor Migrants to Selected Countries of Destination, 1991–1999 (Dang *et al.*, 2003)

Destination	Total	Female	Percentage of Female
Japan	9,757	4,117	42.2
South Korea	36,107	8,007	22.2
Taiwan	6,615	3,468	52.4
Singapore	487	3	0.6
Arab	712	234	32.9
Kuwait	2,527	21	0.8
Libya	9670	0	0
Eastern Europe*	4,460	1,305	29.3

Note: *includes Former USSR, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, Poland, and Slovakia. Source: MOLISA (2000)

Marriage migration from Vietnam to Korea started around 1999, nearly a decade after labor migration became relatively common. The fact that labor migration from Vietnam to Korea occurred a decade ahead leaves open the possibility that marriages among female Vietnamese migrant workers in Korea and Korean men had begun to take place. Consistent with Piper's (2003) discussion on the blurred distinction

between marriage migration and labor migration, one of my interviewees mentioned that some female Vietnamese industrial trainees married Korean men after the economic crisis in 1997. However, the total number of marriages between Vietnamese women and Korean men until 2000 was fairly small.⁸² To verify the possibility of marriages between Vietnamese women workers in Korea and Korean men, I compared the number of spouse visa attainments and the number of cross-border marriage reports.⁸³ As seen in Table 6.5, there are some differences in numbers between the two sets of data. For example, the number of cross-border marriages in 2006 is 10,131 according to Korean vital statistics, but the number of visa attainments from the Korean embassy in Vietnam is 8,529. One speculation is that the difference in numbers may indicate the number of marriages between Vietnamese labor migrants and Koreans. By 2007, 25,659 Vietnamese workers were enumerated in Korea, of whom 4,317 were women. In addition, 13,444 Vietnamese students or Vietnamese of other category were in Korea, of whom 3,278 were women (Ministry of Administration and Security, 2007). It is not clear how many of these women had married Korean men because immigration statistics do not offer data on the number of visa changes. However, the number of Vietnamese female labor migrants and other visa holders, for example, students in Korea,⁸⁴ is not likely to make up the whole difference.

One other possibility is that the difference in numbers arises because of the procedure involved in cross-border marriage. Korean men usually go to Vietnam and marry Vietnamese women in Vietnam, then report their marriage to the Korean government

⁸² Vietnamese were classified as miscellaneous before 2000 in most National Statistical Office publications.

⁸³ I used the data from the Korean embassy in Vietnam instead of Korean immigration office data because the classification of the Korean immigration office data has changed over time.

⁸⁴ Data on marital status is not available.

after they have returned to Korea. Since one can report a marriage without being a spouse present in Korea, a Korean man can report the marriage in Korea in order to speed up the process for his Vietnamese spouse to obtain a visa. Then, the men send the necessary documents to their Vietnamese wives in Vietnam, which allows them to apply for visa to go to Korea. According to my interviews, it takes at least two months and sometimes a year from the time of the marriage to the departure for Korea. Nonetheless, the number of spouse visa attainments clearly indicates that most Vietnamese women who marry Koreans come to Korea directly through marriage, and not initially through labor migration.

Table 6.5 The Number of Spouse Visa Attainments at the Korean Embassy in Vietnam and Cross-Border Marriages, from Vital Statistics

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Reported number of marriages with Vietnamese women	95	134	476	1,403	2,462	5,822	10,131	6,611
Spouse visa attainment	83	104	400	1,602	2,389	4,566	8,529	7,956

(Source: Korean Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City and National Statistical Office)

To more fully understand the relationship between labor migration and marriage migration the trends are examined in Table 6.6 and Figure 6.8. While the volume of Vietnamese marriage migration to Korea has continued to increase, Vietnamese female labor migration has decreased since 2003, after the Korean government introduced the guest worker permit system. Under the guest work permit system, Korean entrepreneurs file their preferences for guest workers to the authorities, who in turn mediate the transaction of labor migrants. In many cases, the economic sectors

most in need of migrant workers, are manufacturing, agriculture, and construction, for which Korean entrepreneurs generally prefer male workers. The opportunities for female labor migrants have been slimmer since 2003. Interestingly, the scale of marriage migration has increased dramatically since 2003 (Ko *et al.*, 2005).

Intuitively, we might hypothesize that Vietnamese women increasingly have been choosing marriage migration, as the channel for labor migration has narrowed.

Because there are many other factors associated with the increase of cross-border marriages, however, establishing causality remains difficult.

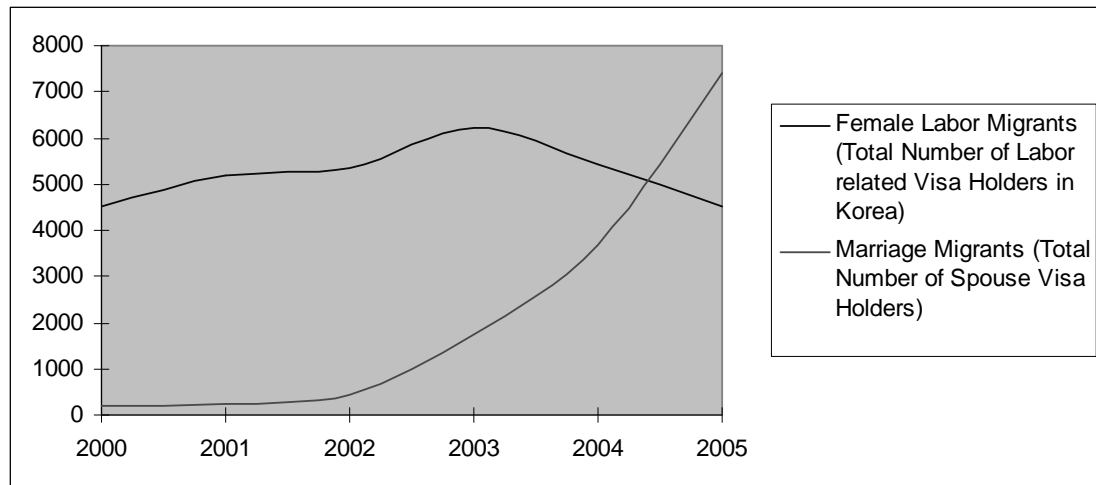


Figure 6.8 Cumulative numbers of female labor migrants and marriage migrants.
(Source: Immigration Statistics from 2000–2005; Ministry of Justice)

Table 6.6 Cumulative Number of Female Labor Migrants and Marriage Migrants

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Female labor migrants (total number of labor-related visa holders in Korea)	4530	5198	5344	6201	5420	4510
Marriage migrants (total number of spouse visa holders)	180	253	444	1744	3693	7412

(Source: Immigration Statistics from 2000–2005; Ministry of Justice)

6.3 Conclusion

I started this chapter by showing the common trends of cross-border marriage in Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and Singapore and raised the question as to whether cross-border marriage is related to the experience of economic development. In exploring this question, I attempted to engage the ongoing discussion regarding economic integration in Asia and the rise of the labor migration system. I have endeavored to show that the patterns of labor migration and marriage migration within East and Southeast Asia are quite similar in some ways. Understanding marriage migration in this context requires further analysis, however. I have explored some demographic and economic indicators, including changes in the contribution of agriculture to GDP, the percent of the labor force engaged in agriculture, the percent the population that is urban, women's labor force participation, and fertility, to show the structural similarities and differences among these countries. In order to locate cross-border marriage within a regional context, in particular as it relates to economic development and integration, it will be necessary to explain the relationship between economic development and the resulting changes in population, family, and the mode of social reproduction, however. This will be discussed more in the next chapter.

In the second half of the chapter, I explored possible linkages between FDI, mass cultural exchange, and labor exchange, which were suggested by migration system theorists. This is a somewhat troublesome process because it is difficult to show a direct relationship between these factors and cross-border marriage, although the linkage appears reasonable intuitively. Although I acknowledge that examining each factor's associated with cross-border marriage is not the most feasible way to describe the relationships, I have attempted to consider each factor individually in as detailed a way as possible before providing a story. Last, I did not devote a great deal of

attention to the marriage brokerage industry in this chapter because the previous chapter highlighted the emergence of marriage brokerage industry.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
FAMILY DEPENDENT SOCIAL REPRODUCTION SYSTEM IN KOREA
AND THE “MULTICULTURAL FAMILY” AS AN ENTERPRISE FOR
RESTORING FAMILY VALUES IN THE CHANGING POLITICAL
ECONOMIC CONTEXT

In 2006, when the report of immigration statistics in South Korea was released, the South Korean media generated a great deal of publicity about it and competitively published articles with titles such as “With 1 million foreigners, Korea is heading toward a multicultural society” and “Foreigners occupy 1% of the population: The Age of the Multicultural Society has arrived in Korea” (Seoulsinmun, 2005). Setting aside questions of what qualifies as a multicultural society or what constitutes a “big” number, these articles reflect the media’s great interest in the presence of foreigners. As of 2007, 1 million (1,066,291) foreigners resided in Korea, of whom about 10% were female marriage migrants (Ministry of Justice, 2008a).⁸⁵ Although the total number of marriage migrants among foreigners is not large, marriage between Korean men and foreign women in particular has garnered enormous attention due to its dramatic increase. “Marriage migrants” and “multicultural family” were the most popular terms in the policy arena since 2006, and a wide range of policies related to cross-border marriage or multicultural families have been implemented. The attention to the multicultural families is not just about the issue of increasing number of foreigners in Korea. In this chapter, I attempt to examine how the attention to the multicultural family is linked to the current issues of the population and care crises in Korea, and suggest that cross-border marriages may play a role as one of the mechanisms for dealing with these issues.

⁸⁵ This report also notes that there were 8,145 illegal migrants who came to Korea through marriage.

The family has been an important institution for care provision in Korean society, where the state plays a relatively minor role. The way in which family provides care has changed overtime as family patterns changed and women's labor force participation increased from the industrialization since the 1960s. Furthermore the recent economic restructuring in the 1990s put pressure on the current welfare regime to be re-organized. The attention to the cross-border marriage and multicultural families can be understood in the context of changing the family dependent welfare regime in Korea. In this chapter, I attempt to show how the concerns of population and care provision intersect around the families, and how multicultural families are linked to these concerns. First, I will explore the changes in population, labor, and welfare regime in Korea with a focus on the family, women's labor force participation, and how these changes are reflected in the recent policies on "healthy families." Then, I will provide a brief description of the demographic characteristics of cross-border marriage from the 2009 National Survey on Multicultural Families and the 2006 marriage-migrants survey and discuss the implications of the multicultural family in the given context.

7.1 Conditions and Discourse of Population and Care Crisis in Korea

7.1.1 Population Regime

7.1.1.1 Family Planning Campaign under the Developmental Regime (1961–1995)

Population has been an important concern since the developmental regime, which seized power through a coup in 1961. During this period the governance was highly centralized and oriented toward economic development, and it has often been called a "developmental dictatorship" or "developmental state." Population control was rationalized as a condition for the adequate supply of labor and jobs in the economic

development plan, as the “Population, Labor Force and Employment” section in the summary of the first five-year economic plan in 1962 makes clear:

Since population, in the absence of well developed national policies, can be expected to grow at an accelerated rate, due to improved medical and sanitation services, which will reduce the death rate, and to an increase of females of reproductive age, population control measures will be required. . . . Assuming that the sum of the rate of increase in employment and the rate of increase in productivity determines the rate of economic growth, it is expected that the number of new jobs created will be greater than the number of new entrants to the labor force during the plan period, thereby reducing unemployment. (p. 31)

A national family-planning program was started by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in 1962, and family-planning counseling clinics were set up at 183 health centers (Kim and Ross, 2007). The family-planning program was linked to the overall development of maternal and child-care services in the second economic development plan (Korean Government, 1966, pp. 131–132). The Planned Parenthood Federation of Korea (PPFK) was established as a voluntary organization in 1961 as a member association of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and played an important role in processing foreign aid for family planning and delivering family-planning programs to the public, including educating people about various contraceptive methods, providing contraceptive services and supplies, and conducting research.⁸⁶ The PPFK’s statement of purpose indicates that the family-planning campaign was carried out not only in terms of limiting the number of children but also in terms of a broader modernization project:

⁸⁶ Although it was a voluntary organization, it worked closely with the government. Its annual budget grew to 450,000 USD, 90% of which was from foreign grants and 10% of which was from the government (Kim *et al.*, 1972, p. 77). According to Kim *et al.* (1972), over 3 million dollars of foreign contributions were made to the PPFK from 1961 to 1972, and the primary contributors are the Population Council and the IPPF, with the Pathfinder Fund, OXFAM, the Asia Foundation, and the Brush Fund providing smaller amounts.

The family planning movement aims at helping individual families maintain an ideal family size and thus guarantee a better life for all people. Accordingly, family planning is: a moral movement designed to respect a human life from the time of birth; a public health movement for maternal and child health, both physical and mental; and a cultural movement which helps all people have a worthwhile life through betterment of the individual and national economic standard. (Kim *et al.*, 1972, p. 76)

The plan of the family-planning campaign in Korea was highly centralized but its execution was decentralized. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs deployed persons in charge of family planning to each city and province in 1963 (Kim *et al.*, 1972). The PPFK deployed two workers for family planning to medical centers nationwide, and fieldworkers were sent to 1,473 townships for enlightenment purposes (PPFK, 1975 in Hwang, 2005). A network of local women was mobilized by the PPFK. For example, approximately 17,000 mother's clubs were organized in 1968, one for every two or three villages (Kim *et al.*, 1972, p.93). Mother's clubs were an information-sharing network and members encouraged other women in the village to use contraceptive methods, especially birth-control pills. This network later became known as the "New township women's club" with the government's rural development project, the "New township movement," in the 1970s (Hwang, 2005, p.114).

The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs took primary responsibility for family planning, but other ministries were also involved in this project. For example, in 1976, a family with two children enjoyed an income-tax reduction and priority treatment when it came to allocating public housing. Parents who had less than two children and obtained a sterilization operation enjoyed priority treatment for loans and medical services (Kim, 2006). The government used mass communication networks including radio, television, films and exhibitions for family planning campaign. The Office of

Public Information under the Ministry of Culture and Public Information had 118 mobile vans, which showed films in the villages (Kim *et al.*, 1972, p. 91).

As a result of the family-planning campaign and the rapid socioeconomic changes that occurred, the total fertility rate in Korea decreased from 6.3 during the period 1955–1960 (Kwon, 1981, p. 25), to 3.47 in 1975, and to 1.67 in 1985, which is below the replacement level (Cho, 1996, p. 23, Repetto, 1981, p. 144). As vital statistics data show, the fertility rate continued to decrease.⁸⁷ (See Table 7.1) However, Kim (1981) noted that the impact of the family-planning program plateaued around the mid-1970s and, hence, the Fourth Five-Year Economic Development Plan (1977–1981) included more indirect population policies, such as those involving education and health care. Also, at this point, the challenge became dealing with the population dynamics that were caused by previous economic development programs such as rural to urban migration (Kim, 1981). The total fertility rate had fallen below the replacement level by 1983, but it was around the mid-1990s that family planning campaign was stopped.

Table 7.1 Trends in Vital Statistics, 1970–2005

Trend	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Total Population*	31,922**	34,707	37,436	40,448	43,411	44,609	46,136	47,870**
Total Fertility Rate	4.53	3.47	2.83	1.67	1.59	1.65	1.47	1.08
Sex Ratio at Birth	109.5	112.4	105.3	109.4	116.5	113.2	110.2	107.7
Life Expectancy	64**	63.82	65.09	68.44	71.28	73.53	76.02	82**

*including foreigners, unit: thousand

** UN Population Prospectus 2006

(Source: National Statistical Office)

⁸⁷ In 2007, the total fertility rate (TFR) increased slightly to 1.26. According to the National Statistical Office, this is because of the popular belief that according to the Chinese horoscope 2007 is a fortunate year.

7.1.1.2 Population Quality and Pronatalist Policies (1996–present)

In 1994, the “Committee for Development of Population Policy” was organized as an advisory committee for the Minister of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (currently Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs),⁸⁸ and this committee recommended abolishing the “population control policy” and promoting a “population quality and welfare policy” (Kim *et al.*, 2004, p. 106). The Population Policy Inquiry Council⁸⁹ also suggested that policies to lower fertility were no longer desirable based on population projections for 2021. According to the projections, Korea will experience a decrease in the labor force and an increasing burden in supporting the aging population. Accordingly, the general ideas of the new population policy of 1996 are as follows: 1) maintaining the current fertility rate,⁹⁰ which is necessary for sustainable development and improving the mortality rate; 2) promoting family health and welfare; 3) balancing the sex ratio at birth; 4) promoting women’s labor force participation and welfare; 5) improving the health and welfare of older adults; and 6) balancing the geographical population distribution (Cho, 1996).

Planned Parenthood Federation of Korea (PPFK) changed its focus and announced a new population policy for population quality in 1996. The new population policy refers to raising fertility and improving the conditions required to do so. The shift of the focus can be read easily from their slogans and posters. In the 1970s, the best-known slogan was “raise two kids regardless of their gender,” and this slogan changed later in the 1980s to “one kid regardless of gender.” In the 2000s, the whole discourse

⁸⁸ Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, http://epic.kdi.re.kr/epic/epic_view.jsp?num=26596&menu=2, accessed on 2009-10-07.

⁸⁹ It was established in 1976 within the government in order to plan comprehensive population policies. The Minister was the chair of the committee (National Archive, <http://contents.archives.go.kr/next/content/viewMain.do>, accessed on 2009-10-07).

⁹⁰ The total fertility rate in 1996 was 1.7.

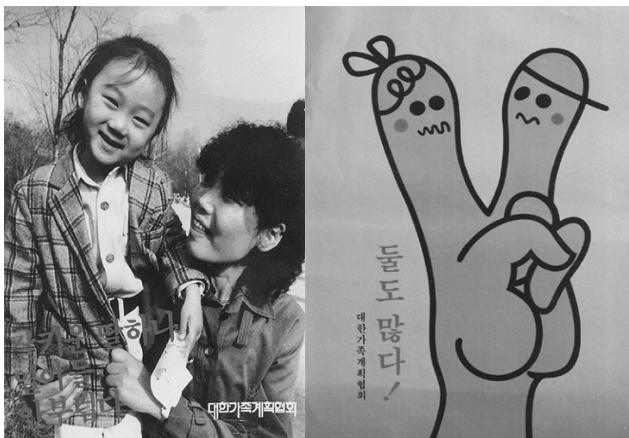
moved in the opposite direction, and the slogan stated, “it is better to have two kids than one, three than two.” With this change in the direction of population policy, the major focus also extended to other areas, such as family/maternal health, marriage projects, aging society projects, youth projects, sexual culture projects with a focus on encouraging more births. For example, the PPFK runs marriage-support programs for single people since it is clear that the low marriage rate contributes to low fertility. The PPFK website does not specify whether it encourages international marriages per se, but the marriage support center website has a banner in the Vietnamese language, as seen in Illustration 6.1 (www.Match.kr). This suggests that the PPFK also recognizes cross-border marriage between Korean nationals and foreigners, in particular, Vietnamese, as a solution to the current low marriage rate. It also provides extensive information about childbirth and child care, including government policies, information on medical centers, child care and maternal health knowledge, and so on (www.aga-love.org). The Planned Parenthood Federation of Korea changed its name to the Population, Health and Welfare Association in 2006.



1970s

Way to \$1,000 GNP per capita in 1981

Raise two kids regardless of their gender



1980s

One well-raised daughter is better than 10 sons.

Even two are too many!



2000s

Marriage and Procreation are the greatest gifts for human beings

It is happier to have two kids than one, three than two.

Illustration 7.1 PPFK Posters from the 1970s to the 2000s

While the population-quality policy helped encourage women's labor force participation and establish the health and welfare system for society's underprivileged, it did not prevent the total fertility rate from decreasing (Cho, 2006). In 2004, the presidential committee on low fertility and a future society was established. One of its mandates was to work on the mid- and long-term population policy. Cho (2006) saw it as a transition towards a pronatalist policy. According to Cho (2006), the purpose of a pronatalist policy is not to increase the population size but to delay a population decrease that would be caused by a rapid low-fertility trend and to maintain the population structure for sustainable development. Concerns about the pace of the population change seem prevalent among population scholars. Many population studies predicted that the speed towards an aging society in Korea will be unprecedented.⁹¹ Because the pace of fertility reduction was extraordinary in Korea, the pace at which its society ages is expected to be extraordinary as well. The real concern regarding this population change lies in the economic arena, with a decrease in the productive population and an increase in the dependent population, including the burden of caring for the elderly population (Kim, Y 2006; Kim, J 2006; Cho 2006; Koo 2006). Other state policies including those for labor, welfare, education, family, and so on are all potentially implicated given concern over Korea's changing demographics.

⁹¹ According to the projections, Korea would take 18 years to reach an aged society with more than 14% of population is older than 65 and 8 additional years to reach an super aged society with more than 20% of population is older than 65, compared with 71 years and 15 years for the United States respectively (Kim Y, 2006, p. 3, Kim, J 2006; Cho 2006; Koo 2006).



“Speed Dating Festival for single men and women, with the support of Ulsan Metropolitan City !!”

Illustration 7.2 Website of Marriage Support Center run by PPFK.

(Source: www.match.kr assessed 2009-02-08)

The quantitative nature of the family planning policy moved towards more a qualitative policy in the context of low fertility. Although the numerical concern about the population remained, the solutions were designed to address the formation of the family, the improvement of public child care and education system, which has been the important function of family, and work–family reconciliation. While the solutions for reducing population growth are standardized and well developed, the solutions for increasing population growth seem more flexible. Hence, the notion of population policy became broader and fuzzier. From the mid-2000s on, a series of population related national laws including the “Framework Act on Healthy Families” (Act. No. 7166) in 2004, the “Basic Law on Low Fertility and an Aging Society” (Act. No.7496)” in 2005, and the “Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea” (Act. No.8442) were passed. At the local level, various population policies were

implemented even before low fertility became a national concern, but more population-related policies were implemented in the mid-2000s. For example, 26 bills supporting marriage for rural bachelors were passed between 2006 and 2007.

7.1.1.3 Decentralization and Population Policy at the Local Level

Concerns about population growth became more acute after the decentralization of the governmental system in 1991 in the rural areas. The basic idea of decentralization (“Local Autonomy System”) was that local governments and councils have political, economic autonomy in their region and that this autonomy will enhance grassroots democracy. However, the level of autonomy has remained very low because local governments are highly dependent on the central government both economically and politically. The scale of the central government’s support for local governments varies depending on the population size and the level of administrative classification of the local government. Furthermore, administrative classifications are also based on population size. For example, in order for a county to become a city, it must have a certain number of residents. Hence, the number of residents is very important to the local government not only administratively, but also economically. Local governments that lack industry to attract people tend to be more vulnerable when it comes to maintaining the population within their administrative territory. Local governments may lose funding as a result of a decline in the local population, and in extreme cases, a population decrease may lead to integration with another administrative unit (Kim Y, 2006). Hence, every local government tends to promote the development plan of its own unit and its own population policy.

The average population growth rate of counties was -1.65 in 2003, and some counties faced a -10.7% population growth rate (National Statistical Office). Under these

circumstances, local governments actively implemented various actions to deal with their own population issues within the available legal frameworks and resources, while the central government addressed more general concerns about low fertility. Although the level of autonomy for local governments is low and, therefore, the contents of their welfare policies are not very different from that of the central government, there are some variations in population policies. Some local governments, which faced serious population problems as a result of a combination of low fertility and an aging population, began implementing population policies before 2005 when the Framework Act on Low Fertility and an Aging Society (Act. No.7496) was implemented at the national level. Among 234 units including cities, counties, and districts, 97 units are classified as “aged societies” (the percentage of people who are older than 65 is more than 14%), and 60 units are classified as “very aged societies” (the percentage of people who are older than 65 is more than 20%) (National Statistical Office). In particular, the more aged areas tend to have weaker economic foundations to attract in-migration. Hence a natural increase of population is important for the governments in those areas; however, natural increase is not very promising either given local population structures. Also, the more aged areas tend to need to spend more on the welfare of the elderly. Promoting marriage among local residents seems very rational for those local governments because family formation can solve both the population and care provision problems at the same time. Indeed, 18 out of 26 local councils that passed bills to support the marriage of rural bachelors have elderly populations of more than 14%.

The population policies of local governments vary from providing financial support for giving birth and raising children to arranging dating events for single men and women. According to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, in 2008

there were 1,710 population policies at the local level, including 54 for marriage support, 504 for pregnancy support, 383 for birth support, 432 for child care, 95 for consciousness raising and public information, 83 for the support for marriage migrants and “multicultural families,” and 159 for others⁹² (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs 2008). The policies are largely geared towards procreation and child care. However, the support for marriage and marriage migrants is also included as an important part in local population policy. Marriage support includes education and free medical examinations for (prospective) couples, free collective weddings, and matchmaking services. Support for marriage migrants includes a social adaptation program, child-care support for multicultural families, and medical support for multicultural families.

A number of local councils devised bills to support the international marriages of local bachelors in 2006 and 2007. Although the titles of the bills vary, their primary intent was to allocate local government funds to rural bachelors who attempt to marry. In most cases, bills specifically indicated support for the international marriages of rural bachelors. These bills can be understood in the context of local population issues.

7.1.2 The Family-Dependent Welfare Regime in Korea

The Korean welfare regime is family-dependent in that wealth is distributed through the wages of individual families and managed at the level of the family unit. The role of state welfare has been rather nominal as shown in Figure 7.1, although it has been

⁹² Pregnancy support includes providing vitamins, various supports for medical examinations for pregnant women and babies, running classes, and funds for celebrating pregnancy. Birth support includes providing funds to support birth, providing necessities for newborns, and supporting health insurance for newborns. Child-care support includes providing funds for child care, nighttime child-care facilities, and medical support. Consciousness raising and public information includes pronatal campaigns, fostering birth- and child-care-friendly environments, birth-friendly company awards, and population education.

increasing over time. The changes in family patterns accumulated from the industrialization period and the economic restructuring in the 1990s undermined this kind of welfare regime. Reorganization of the welfare regime was inevitable and this happened with strengthening state welfare and restoring family welfare simultaneously.

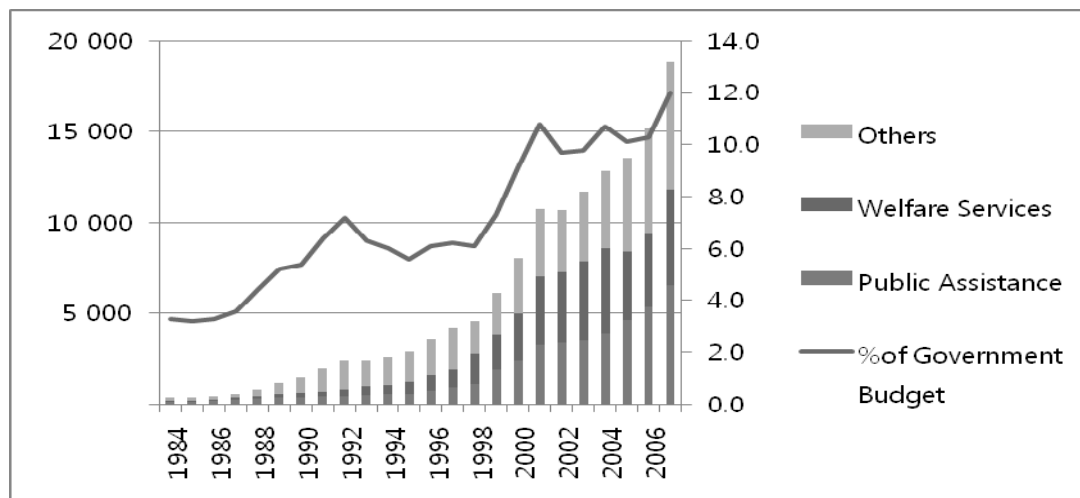


Figure 7.1 Social Security Budget⁹³

Source: Yearbook of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs Statistics, Ministry for Health, Welfare & Family Affairs

The family wage system is an important link among the institutions of the care provision including state, market and family. The family wage and male-breadwinner system are argued to have played an ideological role in the economic structure with regard to wages, taxes, and so on (Hartmann 1981). However, whether a family wage was realized, in other words, whether one person's income has fully supported an

⁹³ The social security budget is divided into three items: public assistance, welfare services, and others. "Social Security is a basic means for building a welfare society by providing an opportunity for all citizens to realize themselves through helping out people who cannot support themselves, such as the elderly. Public Assistance is for the lower-income class or the poor who cannot support themselves. It is funded by the government and the government selects its beneficiaries. Welfare services refers to the institutional facilities for the elderly, the handicapped, the homeless, children, and women. Most of them are run privately, but they are funded by the government as well" (Yearbook of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs Statistics, Ministry for Health 2008, Welfare and Family Affairs).

entire family, is a different question. It is generally agreed that the idea of the family wage and the male breadwinner have been prevalent in Korea (Lee, J 2005; Ma and Lee, J 2007), and that the family wage was realized among a segment of the population during the 1980s with the emergence of middle class in Korea (Kang 2007). The extent to which the decline of the family wage and the male-breadwinner system in Korea contributed to the increase in women's labor force participation is not certain, however. I explore the changes in the family, women's labor force participation, and the wage in the following sections.

7.1.2.1 Changes in the Family

The form of families has diversified with rapid industrialization in Korea. Two-generation households are the most prevalent form even though their contribution within all forms of households decreased from 68.5% in 1980 to 55.4% in 2005⁹⁴(KWDI, 2006). More specifically, the proportion of households with a married couple and their children was quite consistent between 1985 and 2000 (57.8% in 1985, 58% in 1990, 58.6% in 1995, and 57.8% in 2000), but it dropped sharply to 42.2% in 2005 (KWDI, 2006, Table 7.3). This is partly because of the decrease in marriage and the increase in divorce. In addition, there has been a decrease in three-generation households and an increase in one-generation households and single-person households over time (KWDI, 2006). As is shown in Table 7.2, the proportion of three- or more-generation households decreased from 17% in 1980 to 7% in 2005, the

⁹⁴ Census data on households distinguish between family households and nonfamily households. The categories of household data are as follows: one-generation households, two-generation households, three-generation households, four- or more-generation households, one-person households, and nonfamily households. Two-generation households are subdivided into "couple and their children," "a father and his children," "a mother and her children," "a couple and their parents," "a couple and one parent," "a couple, their children, and their siblings," "grandparents and grandchildren," and "others." According to 2005 census data, 76% of two-generation households fall under "a couple and their children."

proportion of single-generation households increased from 8.3% to 16.2%, and that of single-person households increased from 4.8% to 20% (KWDI, 2006). This trend is even more acute in the rural areas because of the out-migration of the younger generation (KWDI, 2006).

Table 7.2 Households by Generation (KWDI, 2006, p. 74)

Year	Single-generation households	Two-generation households	Three-generation households	Four- or more-generation households	Single-person households	Households of unrelated persons
1980	8.3	68.5	16.5	0.5	4.8	1.5
1985	9.6	67	14.4	0.4	6.9	1.7
1990	10.7	66.3	12.2	0.3	9	1.5
1995	12.7	63.3	9.8	0.2	12.7	1.4
2000	14.2	60.8	8.2	0.2	15.5	1.1
2005	16.2	55.4	6.9	0.1	20	1.4

(Source: Census, National Statistical Office)

Table 7.3 Households by Family Type and Composition

Year	Nuclear family			Directly extended family		Other types
	Married couple	Married couple with child(ren)	Father or Mother with child(ren)	Married couple with parents	Married couple with parents and child(ren)	
1985	7.8	57.8	9.7	0.8	9.9	14
1990	9.3	58	8.7	0.9	9.4	13.8
1995	12.6	58.6	8.6	1.1	8	11.2
2000	14.8	57.8	9.4	1.1	6.8	10.1
2005	14.2	42.2	8.6	1	4.5	29.5

(Source: Census, National Statistical Office)

Table 7.4 Female Heads of Households by Marital Status

Year	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Never married	% of total household
1980	22.3	58.1	3.9	15.7	14.7
1985	22.7	52.2	4.3	20.7	15.7
1990	17.7	56.3	5.6	20.4	15.7
1995	15.7	56.1	7.1	21.1	16.6
2000	16.6	50.5	11.6	21.4	18.5
2005	17.9	44.4	14.4	23.2	21.9

(Source: Census, National Statistical Office)

The percentage of female headed household increased from 14.7% in 1980 to 21.9% in 2005 (KWDI, 2006). By marital status, the percentage of divorced female heads of household increased from 3.9% in 1980 to 14.4% in 2005, and the percentage of never-married female heads of household increased from 15.7% in 1980 to 23.2% in 2005⁹⁵ (KWDI, 2006, Table 7.4). The increase in female heads of household has three major causes: 1) the decrease in the marriage rate; 2) the increase in the divorce rate; 3) longer life expectancy. These changes in the form of families intersect with women's labor force participation and care provision. I want to emphasize that the so-called standard family of a married couple and their children, which is assumed when the family wage and male-breadwinner system are discussed, has been the prevalent form, but it is worth noting that it has represented less than 60% of all families at least since 1980, and recently decreased to 42.2%. In addition, while the male breadwinner has been prominent in Korea, female headed households are visibly increasing.

7.1.2.2 Changes in Women's labor force participation

Women's participation in the labor market in Korea has increased steadily since the 1960s. For example, women's labor force participation rate (ages 15+) was 39.3 in

⁹⁵ Yet the percentage of widowed female heads of household is prominent: 58.1% in 1980 and 44.4% in 2005. Among female heads of household, 34% were older than 60 in 2005.

1970, 42.5 in 1980, 47 in 1990, 48.6 in 2000, and 50 in 2005 (Economically Active Population Survey, National Statistical Office). These changes coincide with the industrial structural changes and demographic changes that have occurred such as low fertility, higher education, and postponed marriages (Jang 1998). The female labor participation rate by age shows an interesting pattern (the M shape, pattern shown in Figure 7.2). As I have mentioned earlier, women's labor force participation drops dramatically between the ages of 25 and 29, when reproductive activities are greatest, and takes about a decade to reach the previous labor participation level. Table 7.5 shows that the women's employment drops after marriage and drops further after the procreation, and recovers with the primary school enrollment of the last child. This suggests that women continue to take primary responsibility for child care in the absence of social institutional support (Lee, J 2005). Indeed, the fertility rate by age matches overall changes in female labor force participation by age, and cohort analyses of female labor force participation have supported this argument (Jang, 2005). Furthermore, the data on average time spent on household affairs by marital status and gender in 2004 show that married women spend far more time on household chores, including food preparation, child care, cleaning, laundry, shopping and household management, than any other groups including married men, single women, and single men. Married women thus continue to take responsibility for overall activities of reproduction in addition to child care (Time Use Survey, National Statistical Office, 2004, Figure 7.3).

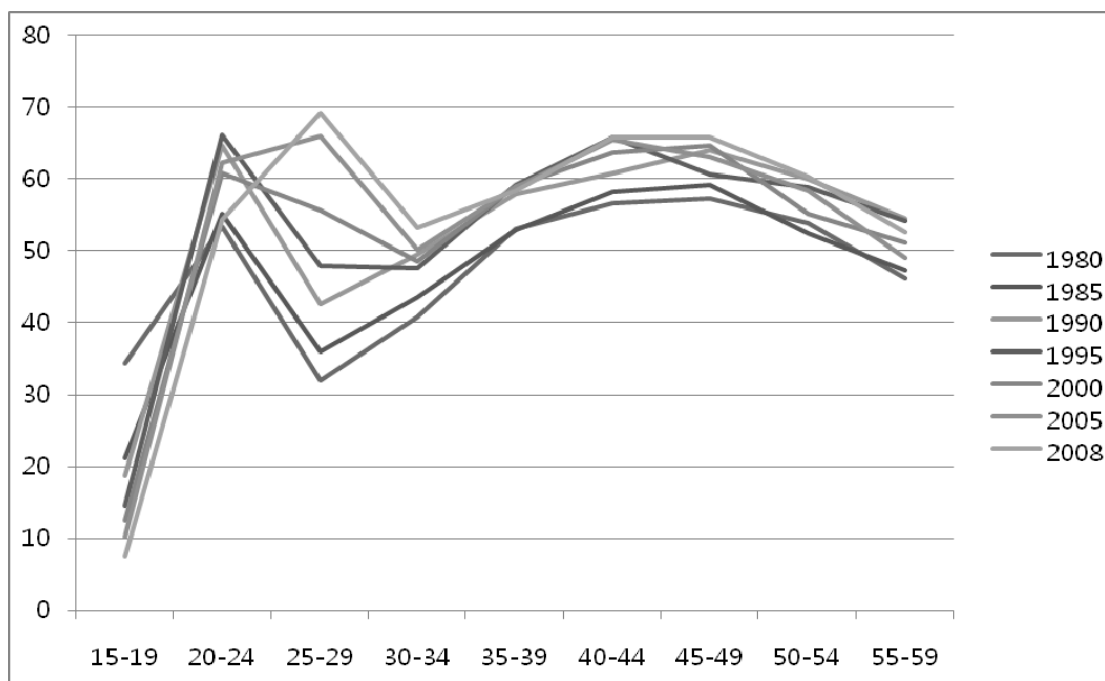


Figure 7.2 Female labor participation rate in Korea, 1980–2008.

(Source: Economically Active Population Survey, National Statistical Office)

Table 7.5 Married Women’s Employment by Life Stage (Kim *et al.*, 2007)

Life stage	Employed	Unemployed	Total (number)
Before marriage	74.8	25.2	100 (7324)
After marriage	37.3	62.7	100 (7324)
before the birth of the first baby	29.7	70.3	100 (6751)
after the birth of the first baby	21.3	78.7	100 (6751)
before the birth of the last baby	25	75	100 (6729)
after the birth of the last baby	21.8	78.2	100 (6729)
before the primary school enrollment of the last child	44.6	55.4	100 (4557)
after the primary school enrollment of the last child	47	53	100 (4557)

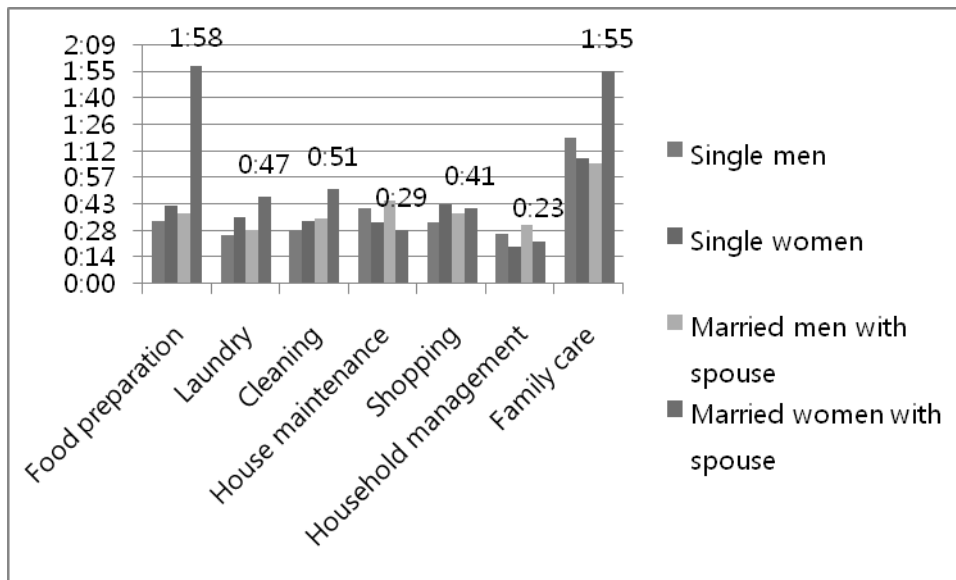


Figure 7.3 Average time for household affairs by gender and marital status.
(Source: National Statistical Office, Time Use Survey 2004)

The pronounced M-shape trend of women's labor force participation was prevalent during the 1980s and the 1990s. Overall participation rates have continued to increase, however, and the sharp drop has eased. In addition, the drop has shifted to later ages with the greatest exit from the labor force occurring among women. One may speculate that there will have to be significant institutional changes to support reproductive activities and child care. However, the number of day-care centers is extremely small relative to the number of children despite its dramatic increase beginning in 1990, as Figure 7.4 shows. At present, women continue to postpone marriage or opt not to get married at all. The average marriage age has increased from 24.8 for women and 27.8 for men in 1990 to 27.7 for women and 30.9 for men in 2005 (KWDI, 2006). The crude marriage rate decreased from 10.6 in 1980 to 6.5 in 2005, and the crude divorce rate increased 0.6 in 1980 to 2.6 in 2005 (KWDI 2006). The proportion of never-married women ages 25 to 29 and 30 to 34 was 11.8 and 2.1 in 1975, 14.1 and 2.7 in 1980, 18.4 and 4.2 in 1985, 22.1 and 5.3 in 1990, 29.8 and 6.7 in 1995 and 40.1 and 10.7 in 2000 (Korean Census in Lee, J, 2005). The relationship

between postponement of marriage or of non-marriage and women's labor force participation is reflected in the data for female heads of household, as noted earlier.

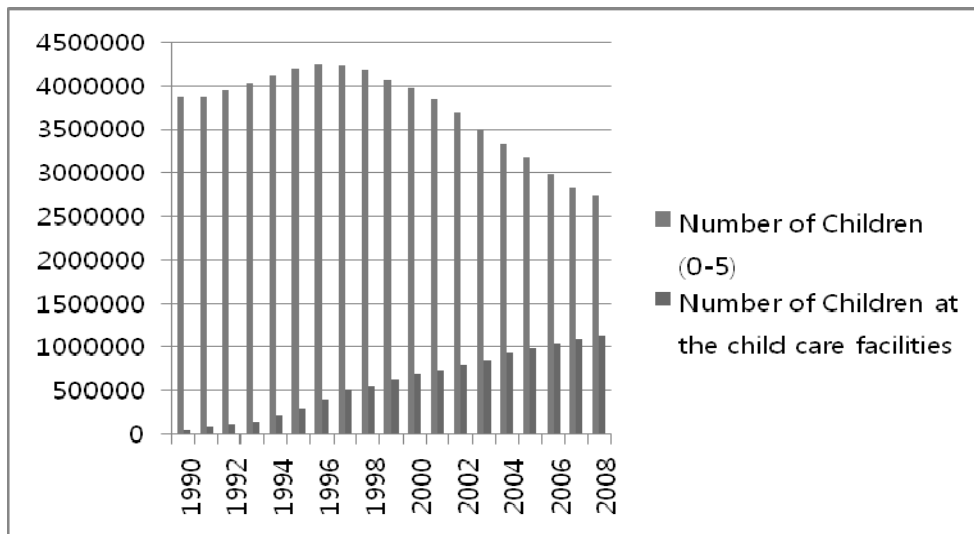


Figure 7.4 Number of children (age 0–5) and number of children in day-care centers.

(Source: Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, Childcare Survey 2009; National Statistical Office, Population prospects 2006)

7.1.2.3 Wages

The increase in wage has been steady both for men and women, as Figure 7.5 shows. Male wages remain higher than female wages, although the percentage of female wages compared with male wages has increased from 44.2% in 1980 to 63.2% in 2000. The gender difference in wages is generally explained as the result of the gender segregation of occupations; men tend to occupy the upper strata of occupations with high productivity, high wages, and high stability, while women occupy the lower strata of occupations with low productivity, low wages, and low stability (Keum, 2002). Furthermore, the gap between single men and married men is tangible, whereas the gap between married women and single women is insignificant. This is partly because women's wages have been lower than men's as a result of structural

discrimination. In addition, that women tend to leave the labor market after marriage or giving birth and reenter the labor market later continues to disadvantage women's wages and careers. In addition, highly educated women, who are likely to occupy the upper strata of the occupations, tend to leave the labor market upon marriage and childbirth.

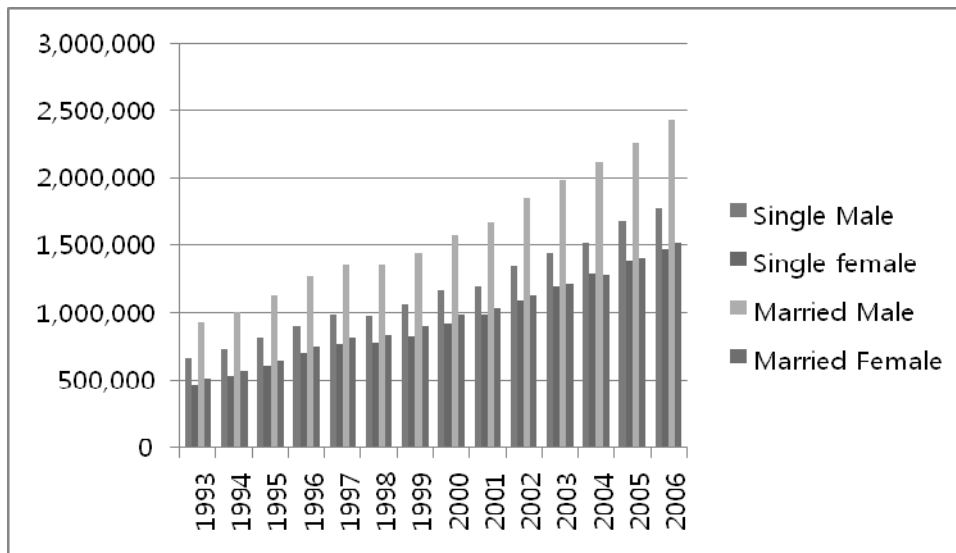


Figure 7.5 Wage by gender and marital status (Wage Structure Survey;⁹⁶ Ministry of Labor)

In 2001, the labor force participation rate of females with a college education or more was 84.4% between the ages of 20 and 24, 69% between the ages of 25 and 29, 50.5% between the ages of 30 and 39, 52.7% between the ages of 40 and 49, and 40.5% between the ages of 50 and 59⁹⁷ (Keum, 2002, p. 17). Keum (2002) explains that the spouses of highly educated women are likely to have sufficient income to support a whole family, and that these women tend to stay at home to care for their child and manage the household after giving birth. The lack of other child-care options and the

⁹⁶ Sample survey of 5,400 companies that have more than 5 employees.

⁹⁷ Keum (2002) explains three reasons for this trend: 1) spouse's high income; 2) child care and household management; 3) low expectations for a future career, such as income and promotion (p. 19).

low future career expectations for income and promotion due to women's family care responsibilities contribute to this decision as well (Keum, 2002, p.19).

The data presented in Table 7.6 suggest that women's labor force participation is high when their husbands' income and education levels are low. It is also worth noting that labor force participation is relatively high for women who do not have children or who live in an extended family. In most cases, the idea of the male breadwinner and the family wage are not expressed explicitly today, for example, as "married men should earn more because they are breadwinners," is instead remains implicit.

Table 7.6 Married Women's labor force participation by Husband's Characteristics (Kim *et al.*, 2007)

Household	Labor participation rate	Husband	Labor participation rate
Total	53	Total	51.3
Household size		Education	
2 or less	63	Primary	65.2
3–4	50.2	Junior high school	70.4
5 or more	55.2	High school	52.1
		University	47.3
Generation		Employment	
1	61	Employed	50.9
2	50.4	Unemployed	59.3
3 or more	64.4		
Number of children		Monthly household income	
None	57.8	990,000-	73.9
1	46.8	1,000,000–1,990,000	59.1
2 or more	54.1	2,000,000–2,990,000	52.9
		3,000,000–3,990,000	44.7
		4,000,000–4,990,000	40.2
		5,000,000+	36
Total number of responses	7,334		6,772

7.1.3 Growing Concerns about the “Crisis” and Policy Responses

Increased concerns about low fertility appeared in the public discourse in the early 2000s. In 2001, newspapers highlighted the fact that the total fertility rate was 1.42 and expressed concerns about low fertility and the aging population. Policy debates ensued from the anti-natalist to the pro-natalist. The alarmist voices became stronger. For example, news articles have increasingly used the term “national catastrophe”

recently.⁹⁸ In addition, the slogan of the 41st women's rally of the Korean National Council of Women in 2005 was "giving birth is patriotic behavior" (2006-4-12 Korean National Council of Women Press Briefing). This is an interesting contrast to the slogan during the family-planning period, "being a patriot through contraception" (Hwang, 2005). Critical feminists have identified the current situation of low fertility as "a crisis but an opportunity" for the feminist movement (Hwang 2005) and criticized the pro-natalist population policy in the early 2000s for failing to take into consideration individual women's contradictory situations, such as the fact that women's participation in the labor market has increased, while the gender division of household work has not changed. Feminist scholars have argued that this deficit of care has led to the low fertility, and that gender equality and work-family reconciliation should therefore be taken into account in policy responses to the problem of low fertility⁹⁹ (Bae 2006). This critique is reflected in the language of the policies on the healthy family and low fertility and an aging society to a certain extent. However, it is not incorporated coherently into the population policies across the nation and the counter-ideological effect of this policy seems bigger than its actual implication.

7.1.3.1 The Healthy Family

The "Healthy Family Campaign" deserves attention because it represents the government's solution to the identified crisis in the mid-2000s. In 2004, the Framework Act on Healthy Families" (Act. No. 7166) was passed. The purpose of this

⁹⁸ "Population catastrophe is coming" (MBC 2005-1-19), "TFR 1.08, we face population catastrophe" (Dongailbo 2006-05-09) "Low fertility should be tackled" (Seoulsinmun 2006-05-15), "Population catastrophe already begun" (Seoul Economy, 2009-07-30)

⁹⁹ Bae (2006) wrote that this point is reflected in the Plan for Low Fertility and an Aging Society. Folbre (1996) offers more theoretical discussion on this. McDonald (2006) discusses low fertility, state policy, and gender equality extensively.

law is “outlining the rights and responsibilities of people, the local and the central government for maintaining healthy family life, developing and sustaining families, realizing healthy family by finding appropriate solutions for family problems, and strengthening the policies to support the welfare of family members” (Framework Act on Healthy Families 1.1). This law clearly indicates that “all the citizens should recognize the importance of marriage and procreation” (8.1). According to the first Basic Plan for Healthy Families (2006–2010), the backgrounds of family policy can be summarized as follows (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2006). First, the Korean family plays an important role in reproduction, welfare, and human development, but the increase in women’s labor force participation and small families has helped weaken the function of the family. The family faces a functional overload. As a result, the younger generation tends to avoid marriage, which translates into low marriage rates and low fertility. The weakened functions of the family, especially reproduction and care, are the new “social danger.” Second, the traditional male-breadwinner model has changed to a dual-earner / dual-career model. To smoothe this transition, the social environment should be changed to one that is gender-equal and family friendly. Finally, the state should play an active role in imposing the vision and values of the family and provide conditions to realize the vision because “the happiness of the family is the essence of state competence.” The plan directly highlights the problem of care provision that accompanied women’s labor force participation and family changes, as well as that of population reproduction. Policy tasks were identified as follows: 1) socialization of family care; 2) work–family reconciliation; 3) support for the diverse family; 4) constituting a family-friendly environment; 5) new family culture and relationships among family members; 6) and expanding infrastructure for family policy.

The implementation of the “Framework Act on Healthy Families” (Act. No. 7166) indicates that there are certain levels of crisis that the Korean government concerns itself with, and this crisis is believed to be resolved by restoring the family¹⁰⁰. One concern is population reproduction, and the other is care provision within the family. The emphasis on the family can be understood in this context. The Korean government’s analysis of the current situation and the emphasis on family seem logical. However, restoring the family does not resolve the tensions around women’s unpaid domestic labor and women’s participation in the labor market. While the proposed policy tasks such as socialization of family care and work–family reconciliation seem appropriate, what remains unsettled is the notion of the “healthy family.”

The law suggests forming “healthy family committees” at the national, provincial, and city levels and establishing a “Basic plan for healthy family” every five years. This law also includes the thematic areas of healthy family support programs and designates a governmental structure in charge of conducting this policy from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs to the section of district administration and suggests establishing “healthy family support centers” at the district level. A Central Committee for Healthy Family Policy has also been established within the government. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs leads the administrative structure, and family welfare departments within the local administration are in charge of executing policies, which is similar to the family-planning campaign structure. The Healthy Family Support Centers were newly established in 2005. Under the central healthy family support center, there are centers

¹⁰⁰ The official English Translation came out as “Framework Act on Healthy Homes” (Act.No.9932) with the amendment in 2010

at the city and province levels and at the county and district levels. Local Healthy Family Support Centers work closely with township-level authorities, welfare centers, medical centers, and various nongovernmental organizations. Local Healthy Family Support Centers tended to be run by local nongovernmental groups with funding from government, and promote a family-friendly environment and services for family life including counseling, education, and child-care support. Multicultural Family Support Centers, which I mentioned in the previous chapter, operate under this organization.

7.1.3.2 Low Fertility and an Aging Society

In 2005, the “Framework Act on Low Fertility and an Aging Society” (Act. No.7496) was passed. Based on this law, a “Presidential Committee for Low Fertility and an Aging Society” was established and the “Board of Low Fertility and an Aging Society,” which consisted of 12 relevant ministries and departments, was established as well. It provided a set of plans for dealing with low fertility and an aging society in 2006. It outlined its focal points of low fertility as follows: 1) reduce the socioeconomic burden on family with children; 2) increase the child-care infrastructure; 3) extend the support for pregnancy and birth; 4) reconcile work–family conflict; 5) strengthen public school education; 6) establish cultural conditions for family life; 7) provide a safe environment for children and adolescents; and 8) establish the support system for children and adolescence (Korean Government, 2006, p. 15). Detailed action plans were widespread across the ministries because increasing fertility requires substantial economic and social change. That is why the outlined focal points are broad and include the family, child care, education, labor, and health. The language of this legislation is almost identical to that of the Framework Act on Healthy Families (Act. No. 7166).

Despite this legislation's focus on the socialization of care, other population policies do not necessarily present the same language. For example, a prominent government-related population study, which was published as a guidebook for government officials and NGO workers in the field of low fertility and an aging society by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, a governmental research institute, suggested that the major factors that have brought fertility to current levels were declining fertility rates from 1950 to 1989 and falling marriage rates during the 1990s (Cho 2006). Hence, it suggested that

in order to recover the fertility rate, a policy to increase the marriage rate should be implemented. Support for forming a family should be pursued as a key policy at the level of city and province as well as district and county. This project should be carried out in cooperation with health centers, marriage brokerage companies, and health-related nongovernmental organizations within each administrative unit. Small and medium-size companies within the administrative district should come up with policies to increase the marriage and fertility rates, the cost for this policy should be reimbursed by the government, and high-performing companies should be rewarded by the government. Both central and local governments should allocate funds to encouraging marriage each fiscal year, and this project should be fostered with high priority (Population Research Institute, 2005 in Cho, 2006, p. 68).

At the local level, a number of local councils came up with bills to support the international marriages of local bachelors in 2006 and 2007. These municipalities tended to have rural townships. I looked up the minutes of local councils that passed these bills. The minutes of local councils showed that the arguments in support express a mixture of concern about population and the welfare of rural bachelors. Most of the bills are based on the "Framework Act on the Rural and Fishery Areas." One bill in Yeongi County was based on the "Framework Act on Low Fertility and an Aging Society" (Act. No.7496). According to the minutes of the Geoje City Council, the rationale for this bill is that "women do not want to stay in the rural areas and the

marriage of rural bachelors became a social issue. This bill encourages the marriage of rural bachelors in order to prevent them from leaving farming (yinong) and to guide rural settlement and vitalize the rural community.” According to the minutes of the Yeongi County council, “the bill was proposed in order to prepare for low fertility and an aging society by solving the sex-ratio imbalance of people of prime marriage age, pursuing sound family, will for life, and the vitality of the local society through international marriage” (Minutes of Yeongi County, 2006-12-06). Considering that these bills were established after a series of policies on low fertility and an aging society were established at the central level and that the guidebooks mentioned above had already been circulated, we can guess that their passage may be somewhat influenced by the discourse around low fertility at the central level. Indeed, the minutes of the Yeongi County Council noted,

It has been only a year since the Framework Act on Low Fertility and an Aging Society (Act. No.7496) was implemented but there is incentive depending on how much legislation for low fertility and an aging society were implemented at the individual local government level. . . . This bill is the one that will win us points when the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs evaluates the local welfare policy. (Minutes of Yeongi County, 2006-12-06)

In addition, there is the possibility of some influence from the marriage brokerage industry, as discussed in an earlier chapter. It is not clear to what extent the brokerage industry lobbied for the establishment of these bills; however, in many cases, local governments selected an international marriage brokerage company to facilitate their international marriage projects¹⁰¹. In addition to lobbying by the marriage brokerage agencies, and in light of the text of the guidebook that encouraged cooperation with local entities including marriage brokerage companies, the idea of working with marriage brokerage agencies at the local level may not have sounded so unreasonable.

¹⁰¹ See chapter five for the more discussion and evidence.

7.2 Contextualizing Cross-Border Marriage in the Crisis of Population and Care

The efforts to reorganize the welfare regime in Korea are twofold: strengthening state welfare and restoring family welfare. As discussed above, the increase in welfare expenditures, in particular, for child-care, women, and family, can be an indicator of strengthening state welfare. The language of state welfare is very prominent in overall population and family policy. For example, policies on family, in particular work–family reconciliation, outline the state’s responsibility. However, these policies oddly imply the other strategy of reorganizing reproduction and restoring family values. The “multicultural family,” which arises through cross-border marriage, is an important site to observe the care provision of the working class.

7.2.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Multicultural Families

The typical demographic characteristics of couples made up of Korean men and Vietnamese women are revealed by a survey conducted by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (Seung-Kwon Kim *et al.*, 2010). This is based on a survey of the total number of foreign spouses of Koreans. Based on the completed responses, the authors weighted the values. The data include 120,146 women and 11,557 men of various origins. Among women migrants, 36,051 are Korean Chinese, 32,926 are Chinese, 25,561 are Vietnamese, 4,996 are Japanese, 8,616 are Filipina, 2,623 are Cambodian, 1,800 are Mongolian, 1,703 are Thai, and the rest are of other ethnicities.

The average age of the Vietnamese women is 24.3, and of their Korean husbands is 41.3. These couples reside in both rural areas (46.8%) and urban areas (53.2%). Further, if we look at the socioeconomic status of multicultural families, they belong predominantly to the lower socioeconomic strata. Of them, 38.1% earn between 1,000,000 won and 2,000,000 won, and 22.5% earn less than 1,000,000 won. This is

less than the average income among Korean households. For example, the average monthly income for all Korean households in 2009 was 2,816,000 won. In addition, given that the average household expenditure in 2009 was 2,437,297 won, the average income of households with marriage migrants was less than the average expenditure for all Koreans.

However, in contrast to the conventional wisdom on the low-income families that suggests that both spouses tend to work if the breadwinner's earnings are not sufficient to support his or her family, the majority of Vietnamese women in these marriages do not participate in the labor market. The National Fertility and Family Survey reveals that only 21.1% work outside the home. This rate is significantly lower than that for lower-income Korean–Korean couples.¹⁰² See Table 7.7 for these and other comparisons.

¹⁰² According to the 2009 National Survey on Fertility, Family Health and Welfare in Korea, 71% of women whose husbands' monthly income is less than 990,000 won (approximately 990 USD) work, as do 57.3% of women whose husbands' income is between 1,000,000 won (approximately 1,000 USD) and 1,990,000 won (approximately 1,990 USD).

Table 7.7 Demographic and Economic Characteristics of Multicultural Families

Characteristic	Korean men and women with foreign origins	Korean men and Vietnamese women	Korean men and Korean women
Age gap	10 years	17 years	2.9 (2009)
Urban residence	70.30%	53.20%	80.3% (2005 Census)
Monthly income (less than ₩2,000,000)	60.10%	60.60%	NA*
Women's labor force participation	36.90%	21.10%	49.2% (2009)
Child(ren)	61.60%	72.90%	74.9% (2005 Census) 1.15 (TFR in 2009)
Living with in-laws	27.50%	45.50%	4.36% (2005 Census)
Registered as a person with disability within the family	17.90%		4.60%

(Source: 2009 National Survey on Fertility, Family Health and Welfare in Korea, Korea Institute of Health Affair and Social Affair)

*Average Monthly Current Income (2009) is ₩3,293,928

Why the labor force participation of these women is relatively low despite the insufficient income of their families is an important question. The survey data show that in the case of Vietnamese migrant women, working outside the home is not often an option. The survey data also show that 89% of Vietnamese women who are not employed at present do show an interest in working. Therefore, the question may be why Vietnamese women do not work despite their apparent financial insecurity. According to the survey, the reasons for this are as follows: child-care needs (54.2%), poor grasp of the Korean language (17.4%), no job opportunities (9.7%), objection of family members (4.8%), household chores (7.5%), and other reasons (6.4%) (See Figure 7.6). Given the insufficient public support for child care, it may be a more sensible decision for these women to stay at home to take care of their children.

The other critical point is that Vietnamese women tend to live in extended families: 45.5% answered that they live with their in-laws,¹⁰³ whereas 28.4% of other marriage migrants reported living with their in-laws.¹⁰⁴ Only 4.36% of Korean families live with their in-laws (Census 2005; National Statistical Office). Given that the average age of Korean husbands of Vietnamese women is 41.3 years old, the men's parents are likely older than 60. The fact that Vietnamese women live with their in-laws also indicates that they take responsibility for caring for older adults in addition to child care and household chores in a traditional extended family role.

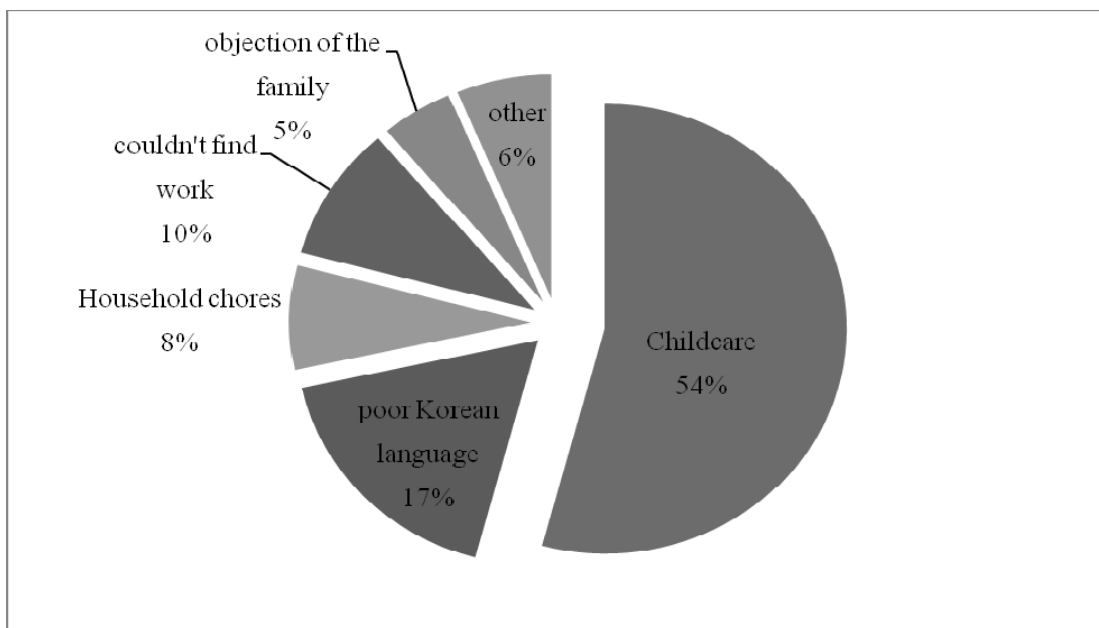


Figure 7.6 Why Vietnamese women do not participate in the labor market.
Source: 2009 National Survey on Fertility, Family Health and Welfare in Korea, Korea Institute of Health Affair and Social Affair

¹⁰³ The total number of answers is 23,423.

¹⁰⁴ The total number of answers is 105,646.

7.2.2 Having a Child: Securing Marriage and Citizenship

The data suggest that a multicultural family that is composed of husband, wife, children, and sometimes the children's grandparents often manages to survive on an insufficient income. Vietnamese wives tend to stay home to take care of children, household chores, and possibly older adults. During my fieldwork, I found that most Vietnamese women have a child within a couple of years after they marry¹⁰⁵ because most husbands or in-laws want the couple to have a child as soon as possible because the husbands are older. Furthermore, marriage brokers tend to advise couples that having a child is the best way to secure the marriage (interview with a Korean marriage broker in Vietnam). Having a child secures not only the marriage but also the wife's citizenship. It currently takes two years for marriage migrants to be able to apply for citizenship. In cases where the marriage is dissolved within two years, marriage migrants cannot apply for citizenship. One exception is when a marriage migrant has had a child with a Korean national (Nationality Law 6.2.4)¹⁰⁶. This suggests that the citizenship of marriage migrants is defined not as an individual right but in terms of their roles within the Korean family.

The other intriguing observation is that these families manage their livelihoods with apparently insufficient income. As the data suggested, a significant number of married Korean women with husbands having lower income participate in the labor market. However, the data also show that in the case of Vietnamese women, working outside the home is not often an option. As mentioned above, having a child at the beginning of the marriage life keeps Vietnamese women from participating in the labor market. It seems that having a woman stay at home is essential to the care of children and

¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, the survey doesn't provide information about the timing of childbearing.

¹⁰⁶ The other exception is when the cause of dissolution of marriage was not caused by marriage migrant (Nationality Law 6.2.3).

older adults in some cases. How these families manage to earn a sufficient livelihood is another important question, but one beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, the given circumstances indicate that there must be some form of hidden labor to manage living with insufficient resources, and the labor of Vietnamese women at home seems indispensable in this case.

7.3 Politics of the Multicultural Family

I have discussed how family became an important policy agenda in the context of the “crisis” of social reproduction in Korea and how the policies and discourses around cross-border marriage have served to manage the social reproduction crisis. The ways in which cross-border marriage can serve as a solution for this crisis are more obviously revealed in the early discourse of the “rural bachelor’s marriage problem,” which epitomized the rural crisis in Korea in the 1980s and 1990s when the liberalization of agriculture was carried out. Korean farmers faced global pressure to liberalize their markets for agricultural products and to commercialize agriculture in order to survive in the arena of global competition. A chronic labor/population deficit in the rural areas and the rural bachelors’ marriage issues indicate that the reproduction mechanism in rural areas needed to be reorganized. In this context, cross-border marriage became a popular solution for population, labor, and care provisions rather than long-term structural changes for sustainable rural development. I began this chapter with the excitement about “multicultural Korea” which was covered in the newspapers. When cross-border marriage is combined with the discourse on multiculturalism, the implications of cross-border marriage become even more complicated.

The term “multicultural” has been one of the most popular terms in the Korean policy arena since the mid-2000s. The term “multicultural family,” which refers to a family created through cross-border marriage, has been a major site for manifesting “multiculturalism.” The term “multicultural society” was initially used in civil society but was later adopted and appropriated by the government. Many of the policies for a multicultural society are the same as those for multicultural families. Despite the popularity of the term, there has been little in-depth discussion about the actual substance of multiculturalism. Only a small amount of critical literature exists on this subject in Korea. The common take on the subject is that the state-sponsored discourse on multiculturalism overruled the reality in Korea (Eum, 2006; Yoon, 2007; Cheon, 2004).¹⁰⁷ Multiculturalism in Korea vaguely implies a society in which different people live together. It also carries the positive connotation of being cosmopolitan or global, derived from the characteristics of leading global cities. A cosmopolitan society presumes mobility, and mobility is associated with power. If a certain place becomes a destination, it may mean that it has something important with which to attract these flows.

The notion of the multicultural family is contradictory and yet a brilliant invention in which a powerful mirage is created of an affluent, sophisticated, and cosmopolitan society. However, the fact that the multicultural family became a site for celebrating a multicultural society is an irony, because these multicultural families are predominantly located in the lower socioeconomic strata. What constitutes a multicultural family is the presence of a woman of foreign origin. In a way, multicultural families are not those who have benefited the most from the global

¹⁰⁷ The level of analysis varies from policy analysis to critiques of the notion of multiculturalism itself.

circuit of mobility; rather, they belong to the counter geography of globalization,¹⁰⁸ in Sassen's terms (2002). Both marriage migrants and their working-class husbands are mobilized under the illusion of the multicultural society by being labeled a multicultural family. At the same time, this mirage effectively obscures the socioeconomic structural issues that initially created its global flow.

As mentioned earlier, there has been broad population policy reform in the 2000s. The major problem of low fertility is often identified as a problem, both as it is associated with a labor deficit and with an increasing old age dependency.¹⁰⁹ In this case, allowing more immigration can be a reasonable option. However, Korean immigration policy has been very selective. For example, Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea (Act. No.8442) specifies the treatment of individual groups including marriage migrants, permanent residents, refugees, expats and Korean diasporas (Chapter 3). This act doesn't include the treatment on unskilled laborers and undocumented workers. Even within the discourse of multiculturalism, scant attention has been paid to migrant workers in Korea. Indeed, the most aggressive repression of undocumented workers occurred at the same time that multicultural Korea was celebrated. This situation indicates that the identified "crisis" of reproduction is more than the number of people in the territory and the supply of labor needed in the field. Marriage migrants are invited to the discourse on multicultural Korea because they are part of the Korean family. They are the wives of Korean farmers and working-class men and the mothers of Korean children. Their presence is meaningful only in terms of the

¹⁰⁸ Sassen (2002) characterizes the relationship of "the alternative circuits for survival" to the global economic restructuring as "counter geographies of globalization" because they are "associated with some of the key programs and conditions that are at the heart of the global economy, but they are not represented as connected to globalization and often actually operate outside and in violation of laws and treaties, without being exclusively embedded in criminal operations as in the case with the illegal drugs trade" (p. 104).

¹⁰⁹ Kim Y., 2006, p. 3; Kim, J., 2006; Cho, 2006; Koo, 2006.

family. This tendency is revealed in the nationality policy. For example, one must wait two years after a marriage is performed to apply for citizenship. In the case of a marriage being dissolved before two years, a woman can apply for citizenship only if she has children fathered by her Korean husband¹¹⁰.

Furthermore, the Support for Multicultural Families Act (Act. No. 8937) passed in 2008, which was based on the Framework Act on Healthy Families (Act. No. 7166) and the Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea (Act. No.8442). This is a good example of how the “multicultural family” is perceived in the policy arena. The policy indicates that it is the responsibility of state and local governments to provide institutional conditions for family members of multicultural families to maintain a stable family life. Significant parts of the outlined supports in this law are counseling on family issues and domestic violence and education including social adoptability; vocational training; family life; couple relationships; parenthood; health and nutrition during pregnancy and after giving birth; and child rearing.¹¹¹ The language of education is intriguingly dominant in this law. Perhaps it is a general liberal tendency to think of education as a silver bullet, but also it can mean that this law assumes that members of multicultural families, precisely marriage migrants, are objects of education. A family formed through cross-border marriage is known as a multicultural family because of the presence of a foreign spouse, but the way to support the multicultural family is through education about the Korean way of family life, which is discussed above. Given that culture and identity are not fixed ideas, the process of putting together the contents of the curriculum becomes another contested concept for forming the idea of the Korean family and what it means to be Korean.

¹¹⁰ The other exception is when the marriage was not dissolved by a marriage migrant (Nationality Law 6.2.3)

¹¹¹ Laws for support of multicultural families (6, 7, 8, 9, 10).

The politics of the “multicultural family” serves for the reproduction of the totality of society in this sense. Celebrating multiculturalism is the flipside of restoring Korean-ness. It is important to acknowledge that the “multicultural family” has become a site of celebrating multiculturalism because the practice of multiculturalism in Korea is highly selective. Marriage migrants are enthusiastically invited to participate in this discourse because they are the mothers of Korean children and the wives of Korean men. The support program for multicultural families is another contested site for defining “Korean-ness,” and often this support program works by way of unidirectional education. The entire process creates a powerful mirage of an economically affluent, politically sophisticated, cosmopolitan society, but it obscures the actual political economic conditions of the multicultural family’s presence.

CONCLUSION

This project started from the observation of the increasing trend of cross-border marriage in Korea and the overwhelming media and policy responses to marriage migration. This made me raise questions about why cross-border marriage increased dramatically at the moment in Korea and why it gained so much attention in the media and policy arena. I started with exploring several descriptive questions; what are the patterns of cross-border marriages? What are the conditions of cross-border marriages? How did cross-border marriages happen? As I answered these questions, I found that cross-border marriages cannot be divorced from recent demographic and economic changes in Korea.

Cross-border marriages between Korean men and foreign women started as a solution for the rural bachelor's problem which was central to the issue of rural sustainability. Rapid industrialization in Korea coincided with rural to urban migration, the decline in fertility, and the increase in women's labor force participation. Consequently, it led to the rapid decline in rural communities and changes in family patterns. The rural bachelor's marriage problem epitomizes these changes. The recent dramatic increase in cross-border marriages is rooted in Korea's complex structural context. The emergence of marriage brokerage industry from the 1990s is directly linked to this trend. Also policy interventions may have created an environment that is favorable for cross-border marriages. This led me to investigate further structural considerations. On one hand, there were the crises of population and care which have accumulated since the industrialization period and have been decried by the government since the mid 2000s. On the other hand, the neo-liberal restructuring that took place in the 1990s influenced the labor market and family wage system. Population dynamics and the

care crisis are linked to low fertility, which has resulted from the family planning campaign, which was a part of economic development plan, and from the recent decline in marriage rate. At the macro level, it concerns the dependency of the older population. At the micro level, it is linked to the question of who takes care of the older citizens?

Women's labor force participation has increased since the economic development period and is also relevant to the care provision. It undermines the function of family as an institution of care provision, which is based on the ideal of male bread winner and housewife as a care provider by displacing women from home to the labor market thereby reducing this form of families. In the case of Korea, a woman's role as a care provider has remained important even after the increase in women's labor force participation. Women have double burdens and the insufficient institutional support makes this burden heavy. In turn, it contributes to the declining marriage rate.

I have attempted to encompass the discussion of economic changes, demographic changes, changes in the care provision and the welfare regime with the framework of social reproduction. I took the family as a site where all these changes intersect. In connecting these different dots, I took a historical approach. "Historicity" and "relation" are the two terms most important to understanding the general methodological approach of this research. This is not something that I imposed from the beginning. Rather, it became important while I conducted this research and processed the information. The meanings of the words and categories that I once used have been reconceptualized and reconfigured. Even the meaning of social reproduction as I use it here became clear only during my field research and the dissertation-writing process.

I have discussed the feminist debates on social reproduction that took place in the 1970s in some depth because they offered an important account of the relationships among different categories and their historical and regional specificity. The debates shed light on various dimensions of social reproduction including population, labor, and the totality of the society. The importance of the debate surrounding social reproduction lies in recognizing the changing relationships among various sets of categories, and their sensitivity to historical and regional specificity. Feminists have reconceptualized the ways in which economic process and women's labor plays out in the private and the public spheres. The discussion ranges from the level of the household to the global economic structure. Feminists' studies on women's labor are largely based on a historically specific context. For example, the discussion of feminization of labor emerged in the context of the international division of labor, arguing that women's labor in the developing countries was both cheap and easily mobilized for the industrialization of the developing nations and accumulation of the capital. The recent discussion on feminization of labor migration is aligned with the decline of the welfare state and the pressure for lowering the cost of care provision. The recent increase in cross-border marriages in Korea overlapped with these two processes. The fundamental cause of the cross-border marriage in Korea is the economic and demographic changes during its rapid industrialization. This is linked to the broader concern of the re-organization of the family-dependent welfare regime in Korea, which appears to emphasize the state welfare, on one hand, and family values on the other.

The current increase in marriage migration is not just limited to Korea. It happens widely in East Asia and Southeast Asia. There have been cross-border marriages throughout history and there may be many similarities in the forms of this practice in

terms of patriarchal power relations. However, I would like to highlight the specificity of the context rather than the more universal characteristics: why is marriage migration happening at this point in time in East Asia? I found that marriage migration happens in other East Asian countries in a similar manner and that this trend is conspicuous if we take into consideration the global trend of marriage migration. These destinations share relatively similar economic development experiences. I developed the idea that the current trends of cross-border marriage may be relevant to the mode of economic development of these countries. For this thesis, I explored the case of Korea and Vietnam. Based on the research, I came up with the following thesis: the increase in marriage migration in Korea represents a reorganization of social reproduction, which was largely based on the family, in the context of rapid economic development, while the feminization of labor migration on a global scale represents the reorganization of mechanisms of social reproduction in the context of the decline of the welfare state and the privatization of social provision.

In order to explore the changing relationships among categories and the modes of production and social reproduction, I examined the areas of population, welfare, family, and women's labor. Exploring changes in policy and trends in the critical processes just mentioned requires a wide range of archival research and secondary statistical data research. I relied on government policy papers and newspapers for archival research because they are the site where the public authority articulates its ideas at any given moment. Ultimately, I wanted to show the intertwined relationships among social policies of these arenas, which are less highlighted in discussions of economic changes. This entailed more than reviewing policy papers and statistical data. It required engaging in the different bodies of literature on which these policies rely. Each body of literature has been developed along certain intellectual traditions,

logics, methods, and languages. Navigating through different languages and assumptions, and bringing them together into one piece, was indeed challenging work. How to rearticulate them was the biggest challenge throughout the dissertation-writing process, and it is indeed an ongoing challenge.

By combining the field research with the archival research, I attempted not to lose the sense of the real lives of those who enter cross-border marriages. As I interact with marriage migrants and their families, the numbers in the statistical data were revealed as individuals, each of whom bears a history. Meeting various group of people including marriage migrants, their families and neighbors, NGO workers, government officials, and marriage brokers in the rural and urban areas in Korea and Vietnam changed my understanding of conceptual categories such as the rural / the urban, the economic / the political / the cultural, and the public / the private. The categories were in fact intertwined, and the relationships among them were fluid. I would have described these relationships more vividly if this project was more devoted for writing ethnography. My sociological imagination tends to remain at the more structural end, however. This fieldwork experience rather drew my attention to the macro structural changes that have occurred. For example, when I heard the story of the marriage between a Korean man, who used to work for a big steel company in the 1980s and who now worked in a smaller factory after the economic crisis, and a Vietnamese woman, who dropped out of school and worked in a factory in Vietnam, I wondered more about what kinds of social changes had happened in these societies than about what their married life is like. In this sense, my dissertation is not a study of cross-border marriage but a study of the social changes that have facilitated the growth in the practice of cross-border marriage.

I sought to explore the changes at the structural level and how they are intertwined. Incorporating the individual narratives with discussion of the macro-structural changes that have taken place was an ongoing challenge. This challenge makes me re-think the various fronts in the academic debate. Is the counterpart of the macro-structural analysis the individual level of analysis? Is the counterpart of the economic the social, the political, and the cultural? Are one and the other fixed, separate, exclusive categories? For example, there have been many ethnographic studies on cross-border marriage as an alternative to the mail-order-bride approach. I think that this is a valid approach and it sheds light on the complexity of the phenomenon. However, the focus on the individual narratives of these studies is not entirely satisfactory to me even though some of them incorporated structural accounts. My primary interest is in figuring out the mechanisms of what is often vaguely called “globalization,” or the “global power hierarchy.” The macro-structural concern is indispensable in this regard and the challenge is to reidentify the most critical problems of macro-structural analysis. The problem with the mail-order-brides approach is not its macro-structural level of analysis *per se* but its association with the narrow definition of the economic. I pursued a broader definition of the economic, which is based on a understanding of its relationship to other categories, by incorporating feminist discussion on labor and family.

As I noted earlier, the changes in political economic and demographic conditions that have taken place cannot be thought of apart from their political-cultural implications. In particular, the political-cultural implications cannot be discussed without exploring the political economic underpinnings. Hence, I focused on presenting data representing these demographic and economic changes. For example, I focused mainly on the aspects of population reproduction and labor reproduction, that is, care

provision, in Korea. I often juxtaposed statistical trends and political economic discourse at each beginning of the discussion because they are mutually linked and influenced. If there is a gap between these two, it is where politics comes in. For example, the discourse of “rural bachelor’s marriage” and its association with cross-border marriage shows clearly whose interests are at stake, but it takes more effort to figure out that it is a kind of symbolic representation of the rural crisis in the 1980s and 1990s. On the other hand, the discourse of “multiculturalism” and the “multicultural family” indicates the presence of people of foreign origin, but it is less clear whose interests are at stake and what the context is. It obscures the fact that increasing numbers of people who are involved in cross-border marriages are working class men. Also the potential problem of trafficking in women which is associated with commercially arranged marriage is dissolved in the discourse of multicultural family in Korea. In a similar manner to the rural bachelor’s marriage problem, the increase in urban working class men’s marriage may signify a certain problem of social reproduction that members of the urban lower class experience.

New areas of research have emerged in this research process. The bridge to the discussion of social reproduction of the totality of society needs to be explored further. I believe that citizenship is a potential linkage of this discussion. I briefly discussed the political implications while I discussed population reproduction and labor reproduction: how the citizenship of marriage migrants relies on the family; how the support for marriage migrants is designed to cultivate Korean mothers, and how Korean-ness became important in this process. Citizenship needs to be discussed in terms of the social reproduction of the totality of a society, and not merely as a bundle of rights. What constitutes the idea of citizenship and how it has been realized in South Korea are important question to explore. The contractual relationship between

the citizen and the state and state welfare based on the social contract has been rather an ideal in the context of South Korea. It is ironic that the notion of citizenship has gained increasing currency with the influx of migrants. While it illuminates the common ground for claiming basic rights as a member of a community, it also disregards the ways in which membership in Korean society has been reproduced. The odd mixture of strengthening state social policies and restoring the function of the family at the moment reflects the transitional status of the welfare regime. The discussion of citizenship needs to be grounded on these political economic conditions. Also, its relation to the discourse of national identity needs to be discussed further.

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